

WHY I BELIEVE

God Permitted Sin

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The subject of study for the next three lessons is, “Why does God allow suffering and pain?” If God is a loving omnipotent and wise God, why is there so much suffering in His creation among those He created? NOTE: The problem of suffering is directly related to the problem of sin, and we will never get a satisfactory answer to suffering until we grasp what the Bible teaches about sin and its entrance into the human race. The issue of why a loving, omnipotent God would allow suffering can be traced back to why a loving, omnipotent God would allow sin into the world in the first place.
- B. The origin of sin is really inexplicable. It is a mystery and inscrutable to the human mind. No human, this side of glory, will ever comprehend the problem of sin totally. The Christian may contemplate why God permitted sin, but beyond that the subject is incomprehensible and must be left in the hands of God. NOTE: The ultimate answer is well stated by Martin Luther who said, “This is so high that no other answer can be given than, that so it has pleased God.”
- C. The problem of sin goes back to Adam and Eve, and what applies to them applies to the problem of sin in general.

II. THE ENTRANCE OF SIN INTO THE HUMAN RACE

- A. God created Adam and Eve with a free will (Gen. 3:1-6). They were as free as any humans could be under the sovereignty of God. They had no sin nature and lived in perfect surroundings. Their wills were unaffected by sin or environment. God gave them the freedom to choose to obey or disobey Him, and they willfully chose against God.

- B. The consequences of Adam's and Eve's sin were devastating, for they became sinners, separated from God and spiritually dead. Their one act of sin plunged the whole human race into sin (Rom. 5:12). All men because of the Fall of their first parents, have an inherited sin nature and do acts of sin. NOTE: Man is totally depraved, for his whole personality is affected by sin: will, intellect and emotion. Man lost his ability to choose for God because his will became corrupted by sin. Man still has a will but it is inclined towards evil and not towards God. By nature, man possesses a fixed bias of the will against God, and instinctively and willingly turns towards evil. Man is still able to exercise volition but unable to exercise holy volitions. Natural man is not at liberty to choose between good and evil but only to choose between greater and lesser evil. While man is free to choose some acts that are morally good in themselves, this does not prove he can do acts meriting salvation. POINT: Man is a free agent but he cannot originate the love of God in his heart. His will is free in the sense that it is not controlled by any force outside himself, but natural man is a slave to his own sin nature. This is why the natural man needs God's sovereign grace, mercy and love to move upon him in a supernatural way to bring him the miracle of new birth (Eph. 2:1-10). NOTE: Martin Luther said, "Free-will is an empty term, whose reality is lost. And lost liberty, according to my grammar, is no liberty at all."

III. THE PROBLEM

- A. The problem of sin is obvious from man's viewpoint, for Adam willfully disobeyed God and was totally responsible for his acts. This we can clearly understand.
- B. However, from the divine aspect, the problem of sin is far more complex, for why would an omnipotent, holy, just and loving God allow sin to enter His creation?

IV. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT SIN

- A. God is and sin is; therefore sin must be part of the plan, for God cannot be detached from any part of His plan, for He is sovereign. If He is detached, He is not sovereign and if not sovereign, He is not God.

- B. The Bible always places the responsibility for sin on man, never God. Man in his experience always recognizes this as a fact.
- C. God hates sin even though it is included in the plan.

V. WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

- A. “God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass (Eph. 1:11; Rom. 11:33; Heb. 6:17; Rom. 9:15, 18): yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin (James 1:13, 17; I John 1:5), nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established (Acts 2:23; Matt. 17:12; Acts 4:27-28; John 19:11; Prov. 16:33).”
- B. “Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions (Acts 14:18; I Sam. 23:11-12; Matt. 11:21-23); yet hath he not decreed any thing because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions (Rom 9:11, 13, 16, 18).”

VI. THE PERMISSION OF SIN

- A. God, in His omniscience, knew that Adam and Eve would sin and He could have stopped it, seeing He is omnipotent, but He did not.
- B. Christ was a lamb foreordained before the foundation of the world for sin (I Peter 1:20). Therefore we conclude that God did know about the first sin for He made provision for it in eternity past.
- C. God, being perfect and holy, can do no act of sin Himself (James 1:13, 17). However, sin is somehow included in the plan, and man is always responsible for it, yet God always has control over it. NOTE: Isaiah 45:7 probably refers to God creating calamity (tragedy) rather than sin.
- D. God has willed to permit sin but He is in no sense the chargeable cause, for it was Adam and Eve who sinned, not God. God, by permission, willed the possibility of sin. The

very fact that He allowed it to happen and did not prevent it shows that He wills its permission. NOTE: God takes the responsibility for the inclusion of sin as a theoretical principle in His plan. God is not shunning this relationship. However, God does not take the direct responsibility for sin. When God chose to include sin in his plan, He entered into a certain relationship to that sin in such a way that man is still held responsible.

- E. When God willed to permit sin, this allowed Him to be sovereign over sin and yet not be the author of it. God is governor over sin, for He determines its exercise and regulates its bounds by permission (Psa. 76:10). He is neither the inspirer nor the infuser of sin in any of His creatures, but He is its master, by which we mean God's management of the wicked is so entire that they can do nothing except that which His hand and counsel, from everlasting, determined should be done.
- F. When God willed to permit sin, He also preserved man's responsibility (will to choose good or evil). The permissive decree merely makes God the author of free moral agents, who are themselves the authors of sin. NOTE: Man is not a machine without a will or a puppet without a choice or an animal without moral responsibility. The nobility of man demands that he be a free moral agent under the sovereignty of God.
- G. The inclusion of sin in the plan of God is the best plan and this will ultimately bring the most glory to God.

VII. VIEWS ON THE PERMISSION OF THE FALL OF ADAM

- A. Arminian (freewiller): Some Arminians say God knew about Adam's fall but could not do anything about it, for God can never overrule man's free will. Another school of Arminians think that God was an idle spectator, sitting in doubt while Adam fell and was quite surprised. God was thwarted by the creature of His hand. Still others say that God is so sovereign that He limited His sovereignty in the areas of free will; thus he could not intervene into Adam's choice because God had no sovereignty there.

OBJECTIONS:

1. If God knew about Adam's sin and did not do anything about it when He had the power to stop it, then He is a merciless God. He is a monster totally unworthy of worship.
 2. If Adam's sin took God by surprise, then Adam frustrated God's original plan, making Adam greater than God. God is less than a man and not worthy of worship.
 3. If God limited His sovereignty in the area of free will, then He is really not sovereign. He is partially sovereign or semi-sovereign, for a limited sovereignty is no sovereignty at all. If God is not sovereign, He is not God.
- B. Calvinistic (sovereignty): The Fall was foreordained by God in His permissive will. It in no sense came as a surprise to Him and after it occurred, He did not feel that He had made a mistake in creating man. NOTE: God could have prevented the Fall but did not; thus God had a purpose in permitting the Fall, having ordained it for His own glory.
1. God did not compel Adam to sin. He simply withheld undeserved, restraining grace, which God was under no obligation to bestow, and left Adam to his free will and this will chose against God. Adam acted freely but was under divine permission.
 2. Possibly one reason God permitted the Fall was to show what free will would do, and then, by overruling it, He showed what the blessings of His grace and the judgments of His justice can do.
 3. It is better to admit a mystery than to deny or water down either God's sovereignty or man's responsibility in the original sin.

VIII. WHY MIGHT GOD PERMIT SIN?

- A. If there was not sin, God could not manifest His grace and love. If there was no sin, there never would have been a Cross.

- B. God permitted sin that men might appreciate good as in contrast to bad. If we did not know good from evil, we would never obey or disobey. We would be machines. NOTE: Man was created to have fellowship with God and to love Him. Compelled fellowship would bring no glory to God. Man is morally responsible to God.
- C. Sin was a hypothetical principle that always existed and was allowed to manifest itself so it could be judged.

IX. CONCLUSION

- A. Our sinful, fallen and enslaved minds cannot begin to grasp the incomprehensible and unfathomable things of God and His purpose. We must be humble and have the courage to admit our ignorance and finiteness in understanding God's ways (Isa. 55:8-9).
- B. Martin Luther said, "In God's commands and affairs we must lay aside our wisdom and think thus: Does it appear foolish to me? Then in truth the only reason is that I am a great fool who cannot comprehend the Divine wisdom."
- C. Deuteronomy 29:29: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."