

*THEOLOGY I: Doctrine of Man - Purpose of Creation

Session 3 - Dr. Jeremy Kimble

REVIEW

BIBLICAL VIEW OF PROVIDENCE

- God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he:
 - keeps them **existing** and **maintaining** the properties with which he created them;
 - **cooperates** with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do (concurrence); and
 - **directs** them to fulfill his purposes.
- Governance
 - Scripture also affirms that God providentially works in history, guiding all events to his **intended ends**. His attribute of sovereignty is reflected in the influence His government extends over all areas of life, and all persons, though he has a special care for His own people.
 - He controls the **forces of nature**. (Ps 135:5-7)
 - He directs **human history** (Dan 2:21, 4:35)
 - He even uses **bad acts** for **good purposes** (Gen 50:20, Acts 2:23, Rom 8:28).
 - Proverbs says humans may plan and scheme, but it is the Lord that controls the **final outcome** (Prov 16:1, 33; 19:21). He can shape hearts and implant thoughts, guiding individuals unknowingly to His purpose for their lives.

God and the Problem of Evil

- If God is the author of all, and all is done according to His sovereign plan, is God the author of sin?
 - Many maintain that God somehow ordains the evil acts that sinners do, yet because they do it willingly, God is not the author of it. This is called God working through **secondary causes**, or working **concurrently**. They point to numerous verses that say God indirectly brought about some kind of evil:
 - Gen 50:20, the sin of Joseph's brothers:
 - Ex 9:12, God hardening Pharaoh's heart:
 - Josh 11:20, hardening the hearts of the Canaanites;
 - 2 Sam. 24:1, inciting David to sin by numbering the people (through the agency of Satan, 1 Chron 21:1);
 - Acts 4:27, the action of God and wicked men in the death of Jesus.

- A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology author, minister & theologian, sees a fourfold way in which God relates to evil:
 - **Preventative** (God prevents evil from happening)
 - **Permissive** (God lets evil happen)
 - **Directive** (God directs evil acts to accomplish good ends)
 - **Determinative** (God sets boundaries for evil)
- Incompatibilists (i.e. libertarian free will) believe that determination from **outside sources** is incompatible with genuine freedom. This is the freedom to be able to do otherwise.
- **Compatibilists** (i.e. freedom of inclination) believe that genuine freedom is compatible with God's sovereignty. We are free in that we act according to our **character and desires**. (Isa 10:5-19)

Assume you go with Dr. Kimble Young's Dairy to get ice cream.

Do you want Peaches & Cream or Cow Patty? You choose Peaches & Cream but could just as easily have chosen Cow Patty, We're always free to choose otherwise.

(Cow Patty: double dark chocolate loaded with cookie pieces, toffee pieces & chocolate chips).

Vs... You love chocolate. You choose (**desire**) Cow Patty every single time.

Apart from God intervening in us, we will have inclinations towards sin. (Rom 6)
Once we're saved we're free to walk in new life.

THEOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS

- God exercises **meticulous** sovereignty (Deut 32:39; Ps 135:5-6; Isa 45:5-7, Dan 4:34-35; Ro. 9:6-26; Eph 1:11).
- There is **compatibility** between divine sovereignty and human freedom (Gen 45:4-8; 50:20; Isa 10:5-19; Hab 1:6-17; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; Rom 9:6-26).
- We possess a freedom of **inclination**, not **indifference** (libertarianism).
- There is an **asymmetrical** divine agency in regard to **good** (causative-directive) and **evil** (indirect-permissive).

- God possesses **compatibilist middle knowledge** (counterfactuals).
God knows all things that would be.

Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgement for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than you." Matt 11:20-24

- The glory of God alone is the **ultimate** purpose for **God-world** the relationship.

I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is not God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the Lord, who does all these things. Isa 45:5-7

John MacArthur: American pastor and author known for his internationally syndicated Christian teaching radio and television program *Grace to You*

"the whole reason God ordained evil to exist was for His own glory's sake, so that forever and ever holy angels and redeemed saints would give Him glory in full comprehension of all His attributes. Prior to sin God was not worshiped fully for His righteousness against the background of unrighteousness. He was not worshiped nor could be fully for His love until He demonstrated the kind of love that loves enemy, rebel sinners. He was not worshiped fully for His holiness until His wrath displayed how He hated sin. And He was not worshiped for His grace until He displayed forgiveness and mercy on the elect. In every case there is this great disclosure of the nature of God. Why? To display His glory" ("Why Does Evil Dominate the World?" Found at gty.org)

The fullness of God's attributes are displayed in a fallen world like ours - love, mercy, grace, justice.

Jonathan Edwards: *was an American revivalist preacher, philosopher, and Congregationalist Protestant theologian and widely regarded as one of America's most important and original philosophical theologians.*

“Happiness is the end of the creation...because the end of the creation is that the creation might glorify [the Creator]. Now what is glorifying God, but a rejoicing at that glory he has displayed? An understanding of the perfections of God, merely, cannot be the end of the creation; for he had as good not to understand it, see it and not be at all moved with joy at the sight. Neither can the highest end of the creation be the declaring God's glory to others; for the declaring God's glory is good for nothing otherwise than to raise joy in ourselves and others at what is declared.” (Edwards, Miscellanies no. 3)

- In other words, it would be meaningless for God to create the universe if the highest purpose of the creation was merely **to understand** or **to declare** his perfections. Rather, it is when the creation is **made happy** in understanding and declaring his perfections that God gets the most glory. This begets a certain kind of concrete lifestyle.
- God is the author of the entire story of **history**. His prerogatives are **far greater** than ours in that He is absolutely sovereign. He has created a world that is ultimately for His glory, so we can reverently **ask** God why He brings suffering into our lives, but we have no right to bring **accusations** against Him (e.g. Psalms).
- God is accomplishing **good** (forming his people into ongoing, ever increasing Christ-likeness) and actually accomplishing His **plan**. The full extent of God's glory is able to be seen in this sense. Though it is still mysterious, it does appear to be biblically true.

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Rom 8:28-29

- One final perspective to note on this issue of the problem of evil is the **comfort** God gives in suffering. Christ **suffered** for us, and we are comforted by the promises of God and the love of Jesus from which no evil can separate us (Rom 8:35-39). We await a future day in glory, for which this slight, momentary affliction is preparing us (2 Cor 4:16-18).

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all **comfort**, who **comforts** us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to **comfort** those who are in any affliction, with the **comfort** with which we ourselves are **comforted** by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in **comfort** too. 1 Cor 1:3-5*

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- **Evangelism.** Study of the doctrine of God should lead every Christian to the conclusion that the pluralistic idea that all religions are **different roads** to the same destination is **utterly false**. The Christian idea of God is **distinctive** and **glorious**, and should **motivate** our evangelism, not only because of the needs of lost people, but because of the glory of God. He is worthy of the worship and adoration of every heart that beats on this planet, and He enables evangelistic efforts.
- **Comfort.** Meditation on God should bring **joy** and **assurance** and **comfort** to the Christian's heart. For example, what comfort we should derive from knowing that our salvation is secured by a fully divine Savior, and that we are indwelt and sanctified and kept by the power of a fully divine Holy Spirit. This is not abstract theology, but the basis for joy and assurance. (125 times the Bible says Do not fear - be courageous, God is with us)
- **Ethics.** Before anything else existed, there was **eternal love**, expressed in the Trinity. God as Creator has a **standard** by which we are to live as His creation.

- **For yourself**

- When suffering comes, steep yourself in **Word** and **prayer**.

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isa 41:10

- Know that God's sovereignty **assures** us that things will not ultimately go out of **control**.
- Learn **patience**.
- God cares about the **big** and **small** things.
- God is not ultimately interested in our **comfort**, He is growing us in **holiness** and establishing our **faith**.

- **For others**

- Recognize that grief passes through **predictable stages** and may take a long time. Allow for this.
- Don't try to give **answers** all the time, be **present**.
- At the right time, it is important to emphasize the **truth** of Scripture and that **eternity** awaits us. Help them deal with **guilt**, which is often not because they are at fault.
- **Listen.**
- **Intervene** if necessary (e.g. abuse situations).
- Help them **practically** (meals, visits, baby-sitting, etc.).
- **Pray.**