

Is God the Author of Sin?

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When a person asks, Is God the author of sin? he means, Is God the actor or doer of sin? It is blasphemy to even suppose such a thing. God being the actor of sin is not the same as God creating evil. The evil is the punishment of sin by various judgments. Because Israel had forsaken the Lord and had worshipped other gods, the Lord brought upon them the evil of judgment (I Kings 9:9).

1 Kings 9:9 *And they shall answer, Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the LORD brought upon them all this evil.*

The messenger who was restrained from beheading Elisha realized that his trouble was the evil of judgment from the Lord (II Kings 6:33).

2 Kings 6:33 *And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him: and he said, Behold, this evil is of the LORD; what should I wait for the LORD any longer?*

God brought the evil of judgment upon Israel because they had rejected God's law (Jer. 6:19).

Jeremiah 6:19 *Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.*

Jeremiah met the objector who thinks God sends only good and not evil (Lam. 3:37,38).

Lamentations 3:37-38 *Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not? **38** Out of the mouth of the most High proceedeth not evil and good?*

God is merciful and loving, but He is also just, a God of judgment. If we disobey Him, God will send the evil of punishment upon us (Amos 3:6).

Amos 3:6 *Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?*

In reply to his wife's advice that he curse God and die, Job replied that we receive good and also evil from the hand of God (Job 2:10).

Job 2:10 *But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.*

In Job's case, evil was not for punishment in the same sense as it was in the nation of Israel. God punished Israel, but He tested Job. The Lord referred to Job as being perfect and upright in his generation. This is what God said about him, not what Job said about himself. Job said he was vile (Job 40:4). He abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes (Job 42:6).

Job 40:4 *Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.*

Job 42:6 *Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

Job was not sinless. He manifested some self-righteousness which needed to be removed. Therefore, God tested Job. The blind man who was healed by the Lord was not blind because of some sin he or his parents had committed. God had sent this upon him for the glory of God (John 9:1-3).

John 9:1-3 *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. **2** And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? **3** Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

The contrasting word with evil in Isaiah 45:7 is not "good" but "peace." Hence, moral evil is by no means affirmed as being from God. We can say that as

darkness is the deprivation of light, the evil of punishment is the deprivation of peace. God often procured peace for Israel by destroying their enemies with the evil of war. The principle of God creating the evil of punishment of sin and testing His people for their good and His glory is seen running throughout the Scriptures:

1. For wise and good purposes, God ordered that Joseph be sold into Egypt by his brethren for God's glory and for the good of his brethren (Gen. 45; Ps. 105:17). Joseph's brothers meant to do evil to him, but God meant it for good (Gen. 50:20). He can even turn the wrath of man to praise Him (Ps. 76:10).

2. Pharaoh's heart was hardened. There are 18 references to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart from Exodus 4:21 through Exodus 14:8. These references state that either God hardened his heart or Pharaoh hardened his own heart. God was not a balcony observer while this was going on. God ordered the stubbornness of Pharaoh by commanding. Obedience was required, and by hardening his disobedience was punished. By God's command Pharaoh was obligated, but he did not obey.

3. God sent Assyria against hypocritical Israel to fulfill His will. Although the king of Assyria was sent by God to accomplish His will, the king completely left God. God's sovereignty does not eliminate man's responsibility. Assyria's deed was rewarded, but the motive was punished. Christians may learn a lesson from this. We can do God's will and yet be punished for doing it when it is done from an incorrect motive.

4. God providentially ordained Shimei to curse David (II Sam. 16:5-8). When Abishai wanted to cut off Shimei's head for his cursing David, King David told him, "Let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day" (II Sam. 16:11-12). David recognized that God had sent the evil of cursing through Shimei. David's recognition of his own unworthiness caused him to wonder at his exemptions from trials, not at his trials. While unworthiness convinced David that he had no right to choose, ignorance persuaded him that he had no ability to do so. God makes the choice. David

acknowledged God's sovereignty in elevating that poor shepherd boy to kingship. He, like Hannah, knew that God not only exalts but also abases a person. There is none as holy as the Lord. There is none beside Him. There is no Rock like God. But the Lord also kills and makes alive. He brings down to the grave and raises up. He makes poor and rich, brings low and lifts up, raises the poor out of the dust, lifts the beggar from the dunghill and sets him among princes, etc., (I Sam. 2:1,6-10). The authority of God awed David. He was submissive to the will of God in his life. There is a purpose for every Shimei in the lives of Christians.

5. God, for a holy and gracious purpose, ordained the death of Jesus Christ. Those who crucified Jesus Christ were wicked and sinful not because they crucified Christ but because of their sinful motive for crucifying Him. The sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man are manifested in Christ's crucifixion.

6. God orders wicked kings to do His will: "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled" (Rev. 17:17). This verse of Scripture has reference to the wicked kings of the last days; therefore, it deals with eschatology. But God works unseen in all the political and social changes of the day. All kinds of evil are continually multiplying in religious wickedness, social wickedness, political wickedness, governmental wickedness, etc. The day is fast approaching when God will speak in judgment. In the meantime, we are to pray for those in authority that we might lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty: "I EXHORT therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (I Tim. 2:1-6). Our desire should be like that of the Israelites who requested to pay their own way and be allowed to live peaceably as they passed through a certain territory. Instead of kings, presidents,

statesmen, religionists, and others thwarting God's purpose, they are unconsciously fulfilling it.

All rights to rule pertain to the Lord, and we are to patiently wait for Him to come. God has put in the hearts of kings to fulfill His, not their own, will. While here we are to be subject to the higher powers because they are ordained of God (Rom. 13:1-7). Paul did not specify any particular form of government because any kind of government is better than no government at all. Since governmental power is ordered of God, one who resists the authority resists God. Rulers are here for our good. It is encouraging to know that the consummation of our salvation is nearer now than it was when we were born of the Spirit of God (Rom. 13:11). We can patiently wait for the completion of our salvation when we will be under the direct perfect rule of Jesus Christ who alone has the right to rule.

God's sovereignty does not eliminate man's responsibility. The question is often asked, How can a man be held responsible if he is fulfilling God's purpose? Job illustrates that man is responsible in spite of God's sovereignty. A fourfold estimate of Job is given in the book of Job:

(1) God's estimate of Job was "that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil" (Job 1:8). He was perfect in God's sight because his character contained the seed of completeness (1 John 3:6-9). God's estimate of every child of God is the same because it is based on God's grace.

(2) Satan's estimate of Job was that God was overly protecting Job and providing bountifully for him; and if these things were removed, Job would turn his back on God. He thought Job would do anything for his life (Job 1:9,10; 2:4).

(3) Job's friends' estimate of him was that his judgment must be coming from God because of his sin.

(4) Job's estimate of himself was that he was vile (Job 40:4). He abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes (Job 42:6). When Job heard of his loss, he said he had nothing when he came into this world, and he would have nothing when he left. He recognized that God had visited him, but that God had used

Satan as an instrument in the visitation. He did not blame God, and he did not excuse Satan. When Satan touched his body, his wife asked why he did not curse God and die. He told her she spoke foolishly. Hence, he did not excuse Satan. The apostle Paul did not blame God for his thorn in the flesh, and he realized that Satan was the one beating him (II Cor. 12:1-10). Satan was the instrument used by God in the cases of both Job and Paul. Satan's motive was to destroy Job; therefore, Satan was responsible even though he was the instrument used by God to fulfill His purpose. "The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Prov. 16:4).

God's sovereignty of relationship and His right over the nation of Israel is set forth in Romans 9. This does not indicate that there are not many lessons and principles set forth in the chapter that are applicable to us. God's sovereignty is His absolute and independent right to dispose of all His creatures according to His pleasure. God can either bestow or refuse to bestow blessings on the children of men without prejudice to any of His attributes. He arbitrarily does as He pleases. God is the cause of the effect. God, the first cause, cannot create a first cause. God cannot create God. Everything He created is the second cause. How can the second cause let the first cause do anything? The first cause planned, prepared, created, and controls everything. He is either God or He is not God. Although most people give the Son of God the name of Jesus Christ, they know nothing of His person and characteristics. The foundational truth of all truths is the absolute sovereignty of God.