

WHOSE FAULT? GOD'S OR OURS?

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I spoke last week about God's Sovereignty. Is God Sovereign? The answer is yes .. if ... we use the dictionary: "A Monarch ... King ... Supreme Ruler". As far as God is concerned ... that is correct.

However ... many believers seem to misuse the term sovereign and believe that God literally controls everything that happens in the entire universe. God has all power and everything happens ... just as He wants it. "After all ... God is Sovereign!" Yes ... but that's not what sovereign means!

If everything that happens in your life is from God ... is His will for your life ... then we should all be quite passive ... and just accept whatever happens. How can we think to resist God's will?

But ... as we saw last week ... many things happening to us ... and around us ... aren't God's will at all. And He has nothing to do with them. And we need to be "on guard" about some of these things ... to resist ... take evasive action ... make changes ... and ask God to intervene and deliver us.

I mentioned Calvinism briefly (aka Reformed Tradition). Most have this view of God's sovereignty ... everything that happens ... God is behind it. Last week we heard John Calvin's Story of The Merchant lost in the woods ... Calvin said it "wasn't accidental" as most might think. The merchant's death was not only foreseen by God ... but planned and rendered certain by God.

I assume if Calvin were alive today he'd say the terrorist bombing in Manchester earlier this week was "planned and rendered certain by God" ... so that the 22 dead people (including an 8 year old girl) and 100 plus injured ... was God's fault ... because He is sovereign ... and in control of everything.

Horrific doctrine!!

One current Calvinist Theologian states: "If there is one maverick molecule in the universe ... God is not God". God is that precise over everything. Another Calvinist states: "Not only is every atom and molecule ... every thought and desire ... kept in being by God ... but every twist and turn of each of these is under the direct control of God".

No! God is not directly behind every murder ... rape ... child molestation ... torture ... car crash ... tornado ... earthquake ... economic collapse or war that breaks out. No way! Most of these are entirely contrary to God's will.

We saw many places last week where God didn't get His will ... the Garden of Eden ... think of Israel at the Promised Land ... Israel demanding a King. We saw how God wanted Israel to repent ... to choose life not death. But they didn't go God's way. We read how God wants all men to repent; not willing that any should perish.

But ... plenty will end up in The Lake of Fire ... ultimately.

Genesis 1:26-28 (NKJV)

26 **Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; *let them have dominion (authority)* over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."**

27 **So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.**

28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; *have dominion* over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and **over every living thing that moves on the earth.**"

Amplified Bible: Let them have **complete authority**

NASB Bible: Let them **rule**

God has all power and authority ... but ... He has especially delegated a lot of authority on earth to mankind. Once God has handed over that authority ... thereafter much that happens will be man's responsibility.

God reserves the right to intervene if necessary from time to time to make sure His eternal plan stays on track (e.g. The Flood) ... but mostly He's given authority to man ... and what happens is very much up to man. Up to you and me.

Psalms 115:16 (NKJV)

**16 The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's;
But the earth He has given to the children of men.**

We are free to make many decisions on the earth ... just as we want. We've got authority ... free to choose ... but some choices will be harmful (like in the Garden of Eden). He's not dictating everything that we do. The heavens are God's ... the earth He has given to the sons of men. God has made it plain.

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 (NKJV)

19 I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;

20 that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

Two ways: You choose! But we are given a clue ... choose life!

Who decides the ultimate outcome? WE DO! By the choice we make.

Sometimes you will hear people say, "Why does God allow these bad things to happen?" Very often ... it's the fruit of our choices.

No point in blaming God. "It's your fault ... You're sovereign ... You could have stopped this ... etc".

If it's happening on the earth ... a great deal of it is down to mankind ... a great deal of what we see around us ... is the consequence of man's choices.

Matthew 6:6-10 (NKJV)

6 But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

8 "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

9 **In this manner, therefore, pray:**

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

10 Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

Why pray this ... if God's will always prevails anyway? More fully in the Kingdom of God in the Millennium ... but even there ... people will still be able to choose.

Proverbs 14:12 (NKJV)

12 **There is a way that seems right to a man,**

But its end is the way of death.

There is a way that seem right ... and usually what man chooses ... but ... it's the way of death.

People don't just decide to go the way of death ... analysts ... consultants ... psychologists ... church leaders ... all ... consider all of the options (apart from scripture!) ... then choose the way that seems right to them ... seems best. But the end is the way of death. Not just a sudden death ... but a progression.

Proverbs 4:14-19 (NKJV)

14 **Do not enter the path of the wicked, (a direction of travel)**

And do not walk in the way of evil.

15 Avoid it, do not travel on it;

Turn away from it and pass on.

16 For they do not sleep unless they have done evil;

And their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall.

17 For they eat the bread of wickedness,

And drink the wine of violence.

18 **But the path of the just is like the shining sun,**

(Another way. That's the path we should be on)

That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.

19 **The way of the wicked is like darkness;**

They do not know what makes them stumble.

The Path of the Just or the way of the wicked. Choose!
Decide! God isn't going to force people down one particular route ... but He does give instructions ... "Choose life!!" But ... we get to choose ... any old way we want. The way of the wicked brings bad consequences.

One of my favourite passages.

Proverbs 1:7 (NKJV)

7 **The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,**

But fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Wisdom and instruction are available.

Proverbs 1:20-33 (NKJV)

20 **Wisdom calls aloud** outside;

She raises her voice in the open squares.

21 **She cries out** in the chief concourses,

At the openings of the gates in the city

She speaks her words: (not something hidden away)

22 "How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity?

For scorners delight in their scorning,

And **fools hate knowledge.**

23 **Turn at my rebuke;**

Surely I will pour out my spirit on you;
I will make my words known to you.

24 Because **I have called and you refused,**
I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded,

25 Because **you disdained all my counsel,**
And would have none of my rebuke,

26 I also will laugh at your calamity;

I will mock when your terror comes,

27 When your terror comes like a storm,

And your destruction comes like a whirlwind,

When distress and anguish come upon you. *(because it will!)*

28 **“Then they will call on me, but I will not answer;**
They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me.

29 **Because they hated knowledge**
And did not choose the fear of the Lord,

30 They would have none of my counsel
And despised my every rebuke.

31 **Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way,**
And be filled to the full with their own fancies.

32 For the turning away of the simple will slay them,
And the complacency of fools will destroy them;

33 **But whoever listens to me will dwell safely,**
And will be secure, without fear of evil.” *(If they choose to listen)*

You can't blame God for calamities ... He's tried to warn ... to instruct ... "choose life" ... but He won't force you.

So you can't say "Oh God ... why did You cause this and why didn't You stop this?" Adam originally set the direction ... much of the world system is cursed ... there are 7 billion people on the earth going about "doing their own thing".

Scriptures are clear that God wants people to live His way ... be blessed ... secure ... prosper ... but mankind too often chooses a very different path ... ends up in misery and death. But the choice is man's!

Proverbs 1:20-33 (Voice)

20 **There's another voice in town.**

It belongs to Lady Wisdom, who calls out in the street.

She cries out in the town square,

21 At the city gates, in the noisy city streets,
you can hear her speaking over the racket.

22 **You simple, naive people, how long will you love your feeble ways?**

You simpletons, how long will you enjoy making fun of what you don't understand?

You fools, how long will you hate learning what truly matters?

23 **Turn to me and receive my gentle correction;**

Watch and I will pour out my spirit on you;

I will share with you my wise words in order to redirect your lives.

24 **You hear, but you have refused to answer my call.**

My hands reached out, but no one noticed.

25 **All my advice, all my correction, all have been neglected—**

you wanted nothing of them.

26 So I will be the laughter you hear when misfortune comes, and it will come.

I will be the mocking sound when panic grips you—

27 When panic comes like a stormy blast,
when misfortune sweeps in like a whirlwind,
when sorrow and anguish weigh you down.

28 This is when they will call on me, but I will not respond;
they will be frantic to find me, but they won't be able.

29 Because they despised knowledge of my ways,
and they also refused to respect and honour the Eternal,

30 **Because they rejected my advice and turned down my correction,**

31 They will surely get what's coming to them:

they'll be forced to eat the fruit of their wicked ways;

they'll gorge themselves on the consequences of their choices.

32 You see, it's turning away from me that brings death to the simple,

and it's self-satisfaction that destroys the fools.

33 **But those who listen to me now will live under divine protection; they can rest knowing they are out of harm's way.**

Ezekiel 18:20-32 (NKJV)

20 **The soul who sins shall die.** The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son.

(It's the individual who pays the consequences) The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

21 "But **if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die.**

22 None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live.

23 Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord God, "and not that he should turn from his ways and live?"

24 "But **when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live?** All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; **because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die.**

26 When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies.

27 Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive.

28 Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

29 **Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' O house of Israel, is it not My ways which are fair, and your ways which are not fair?**

30 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord God. **"Repent, and turn**

from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin.

31 Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and **get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit**. For why should you die, O house of Israel?

32 For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord God. **"Therefore turn and live!"**

Righteous or unrighteous ... both get to choose. The outcome ... including death ... is their choice. If they live or die ... it's their choice.

God's will is that they turn and live. Did he get His will? In the main ... no! Captivity ... oppression ... invasion ... even in the New Testament as we saw last week.

Matthew 23:37-38 (NKJV)

37 **"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, (Jesus looked out over Jerusalem ... and wept)** the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! **How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!** **(God wasn't the problem ... they were)**

38 See! Your house is left to you desolate;

Circa 70 AD ... 1 million died in the Siege of Jerusalem. (According to Josephus) Why did God allow that? He's all powerful and could have stopped it? His sovereign will?

No. God wanted repentance ... and sought it ... myriads of times. He wanted to gather them under His wings ... but they were not willing. They wanted to live their way ... the way of the wicked ... the way that seemeth right unto a man. Probably still the same way today.

Galatians 6:7-9 (NKJV)

7 **Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.**

8 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.

9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

Sowing and reaping. We choose what to sow ... then we get the harvest we've selected.

Sow potatoes ... get potatoes.

Sow corn ... get corn.

Sow rebellion ... get calamity.

Sow good things ... get good things.

Good things ... bad things ... we get to choose.

We determine many of the outcomes in our lives by what we choose to sow. Remember the 6 "D's":

DECISIONS DETERMINE DIRECTION: DIRECTION DETERMINES DESTINY.

It is common to blame God ... to point the finger at Him ... rather than accept our own responsibility.

Proverbs 19:3 (NKJV)

**3 The foolishness of a man twists his way,
And his heart frets against the Lord.**

Proverbs 19:3 (MSG)

**3 People ruin their lives by their own stupidity,
so why does God always get blamed?**

Calamities do happen ... major problems do occur in our lives. "Well. It must be God's will. It couldn't have happened if He hadn't allowed it. All things work together for good. God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform". And lots of religious platitudes get rolled out.

Well. Maybe. But typically ... these are the consequences of our decisions. Or ... at times ... the impact of a fallen world all around us.

And. Please don't forget our invisible enemy! What's his role in all of this?

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (NKJV)

3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,

4 whose minds *the god of this age has blinded*, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

Satan blinds the minds of certain people. Keeps them in the dark. They can't see right from wrong. Blinded from the truth. He shouldn't blind our eyes. Maybe the neighbours ... making foolish decisions because they can't see the truth.

Ephesians 2:1-3 (NKJV)

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to *the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience*,

3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

The spirit currently working in people all around ... with desires of the flesh and of the mind ... influenced by satan. A bunch of stuff that is 100% contrary to God's ways. These people are in the majority.

Scripture reveals we're not supposed to be passive about satan either. It's not "Que Sera, Sera". Satan shouldn't just get his will in our lives ... even though he does at times ... and ... in the world ... gets his will most of the time.

WE HAVE A PART TO PLAY. We need to be aware that satan is trying to influence our lives.

Ephesians 4:27 (NKJV)

27 **nor give place to the devil.** (Don't give an opportunity to the devil)

Ephesians 4:27 (NIV)

27 and **do not give the devil a foothold.**

It is something we must do. And ... it's a choice. If the devil gets a foothold in our life ... from which he can wreck our lives. That's our choice. Don't allow it to happen.

Ephesians 6:10-13 (NKJV)

10 **Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.**

11 **Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.** (YOU PUT ON THE ARMOUR ON!! Not God or your spouse)

12 **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**

13 **Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.** (You take up the armour)

Satan has schemes ... strategies ... tactics. Satan is planning. We have spiritual opposition (principalities ... powers ... rulers of the darkness of this age ... spiritual hosts of wickedness) ...trying to divert us ... take us out ... trying to enforce their will. Put your armour on.

1 Peter 5:8-9 (NKJV)

8 **Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.**

9 **Resist him, steadfast in the faith**, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

Be sober! Be vigilant! Resist!

If we don't receive the wisdom that God holds out for us ... don't put on the armour ... we don't resist ... **then it is very likely to be satan's will that we'll experience** ... not God's!

So. Don't keep blaming God for things that He's not responsible for.