**Why Would a God of Love Allow Evil and Suffering?**

By B. D. Tate

This subject is one of the major reasons Christian people are shipwrecked in their faith towards God. It is why many become atheist or agnostic about a God. The contradiction of God’s love being passive, unmoved, unresponsive, and negligent does not translate into trust, belief, or praise towards the Creator. In our hearts, we just cannot reconcile a God of love with the horrific suffering in our world. Something is wrong. Something is missing, and some things do not add up correctly.

Complicating this dilemma is the religious teachings that increases the confusion, adding to the dismay, by stating that God is in complete control—God is sovereign, who are we to question? Or teaching that glosses over it, as if in denial, by some kind of cliché. A cliché such as: though He slays me, yet will I trust in the name of the Lord; or even worse, we are only servants in the hands of God predestined to suffering and pain.

This is also true: We might not have all of the facts, we might have been told half truths, and we may have misunderstood what we’ve been told.

God put in us understanding, reason, inquiry, and the want to know! We were created to discover, investigate, and search.

Pr 25:2 “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.”

By wanting to know the answers to why, what, where, when, how, we are being human. When answers do not come, when they are not satisfying, or when they are confusing, if not wrong, there is a kind of emptiness and pain. It is torment to *not* know what we really need to know. For example, not knowing the answers to symptoms from a sickness creates fear, anxiety, and even panic. Not knowing the answers to life, death, purpose and meaning, why we are here and is there a God, leaves us without peace, restless, and dissatisfied.

Some have described the human condition as having a spiritual hole that cannot be filled with anything except God. We will find no peace or rest until our hearts are at rest in Him.

**Born Into This!**

We were born into this situation without our consent—we could say victims. We didn’t ask to be brought into this fallen world. We entered into it already thousands of years past. We have joined the human experience as if we have approached a conversation long beyond its beginning. What has happened? Why is it the way it is? Where is it going?

One of the definitions of being lost, without God and separated in sin, is the not knowing. Not knowing is the common ground of all of us; however, the gospel of Jesus Christ’s greatest benefit is the restoration of “knowing.” We know we are saved (Rom. 8:16). We know we are joined in God’s Spirit (I Cor. 6:17). We know we are forgiven (Col. 2:13). This benefit comes to every heart that fully reaches out to Jesus. Furthermore, as we investigate, search things out by remaining faithful with the witness of scripture; we come to know so much more. This knowing is not some mental ascent, or some kind of dogmatic assertion based on pride and human will, no, it comes from the witness of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13).

Jesus said this about His own ministry:

John 7:17 "If anyone wants to do His will, *he shall know* concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.” (Emphasis added)

As I understand this major issue of life, how can the God of love allow such suffering, I want to present answers that satisfy me. I hope they will answer and satisfy you. I also understand how it is that we cannot completely surrender ourselves to a God that has been presented in such an offensive and/or unsettling way. The questions plague us until we have answers that satisfy. I believe God wants to satisfy our questions.

There is another issue. We have a part to play in this search for answers. Our inquiry can be tainted by being offended, angry, resentful, and hurt. Our pain can prevent us from hearing, accepting, or being willing to let go of bad teaching. There is some satisfaction in feeling self justified. When we claim to be a victim, being mistreated, lied to, or otherwise emotionally injured in our heart, we become *vulnerable* to being manipulated, provoked, or propagandized by those who do not want us to find peace with God.

Even our own sinful, willful, and prideful hearts may obstruct our ability to hear God. Our hearts can become hardened, insensitive, and unable to hear. Some people have become so darkened, hardened, and resistant to God that they are no longer free to choose. There is an enemy in this world that oppresses, deceives, and intrudes in the freedom of those who are often willing or many times ignorant of their presence. Certainly, most of us would agree that the news, the facts, the scientific claims of our day, and most of human history, are not always after truth, but filled with agendas. Deception, half-truths, lies, and misrepresented and deliberate false interpretations of facts, are rampant.

I remember being challenged by my seminary professor by this statement: we are all after truth! I don’t believe everyone is after truth for some of the reasons already mentioned, and because many do not want the truth, would rather avoid it, and would be humiliated by it.

The first step in addressing this question about God being love and allowing suffering, is to cover fundamental definitions of love, sovereignty, dominion and free will. If our understanding of these concepts is *skewed* then our conclusions will be also.

**The Mistaken Understanding: God is in Control!**

One of the most important truths we get from the Bible is that God is sovereign, all powerful, knows all things, and is everywhere present; yet, *on the earth* He is NOT in control.

Ps 115:16 “The heaven, *even* the heavens, *are* the LORD’S; *But the earth He has given to the children of men.”* (Emphasis added)

I know that most Christians have been taught that God controls everything, but that is NOT the case. It is a terrible message to relay about God being love, all powerful, caring, and then having to explain all of the evil, sickness, death, and violence, as if God doesn’t use His power to rectify any, if not all of it. Moreover, if God doesn’t stop it even before it happens, how does that possibly show His love?

Then this usually all pivots on “God allowing.” It is further supplemented with God working in mysterious ways and being past our understanding. Finally, we are exhorted to conclude that we must just trust God’s decisions about our lives and those around us. As if God is allowing all of this to happen, the good, the bad, the evil, and the terrible for some great purpose.

I say an emphatic no! God is all powerful, loving, caring, everywhere present, and all knowing, but He is NOT in control! If God *allows anything,* then that makes Him complicit at the least and guilty of negligence concerning love, at the most.

How can God be all powerful and stand by while this fallen world continues? How can God be love and let the horrible things that go on in the earth? If He is allowing these things, then He is responsible for them. If God is in control and He does nothing to stop the violence, rape, murder, death, war and disease, then He is NOT a good God!

**The Good Neighbor**

If a neighbor is anyone we should be helping, then not helping them means we are neglecting to love. Jesus told the story of the *Good Samaritan* to show who was being a good neighbor. Here is that story:

Luke 10:30 Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead.

31 "Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 "Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.

33 "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.

34 "So he went to *him* and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 "On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave *them* to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’

36 "So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"

37 And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

This account shows us Jesus’ attitude towards “allowing” or ignoring the needs of others. It makes it clear that we are not to turn away, but be compassionate as God is compassionate. There is no way we are supposed to be obligated to such standards and God not be.

1Pe 1:16 …because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

God is Holy and true. Jesus said that God’s word is truth (John17:17)! God is His word and His word and actions always agree (are one); therefore, it is fair and just to hold God accountable to His own standards.

If God is nearby to everyone, then He is neighbor to all. As a neighbor, He is obligated to do something. If the priest and Levite were condemned by Jesus for neglecting to act, allowing this Samaritan to remain in his suffering, then God is also responsible and condemnable for not acting in regards to the sufferings of the world!

If God is in control of everything that goes on in this world, then He is NOT a good God. He is guilty of gross negligence and a hypocrite of the greatest magnitude! God may be almighty, but His rule would be anything other than holy!

**If This Is God’s Character**

If this is how we are to understand God, then it is justified that we are angry, resentful, disillusioned, distrustful, and fearful of Him. If this is God, the way He operates, then anyone following this God based on *His love* is foolish and deceived. If God claims to be love and we understand that God is allowing evil, then trusting that God is blinded; furthermore, believing in that God as good, is misled. At best, we would be servants, pets, and slaves of such a God. We would be obeying because we have no choice.

We see this type of authority and control by men in our history and even in present day situations. People are puppets, vessels, and tools in these totalitarian regimes; they are but ponds to serve their master and for his pleasures.

**Is God Evil?**

That is a valid question. If God is allowing the world to tear itself apart, to allow individuals to rob, steal, and kill others, when it is within His power to stop it, He would be treating all of us in ways He would not want to be. That is the definition of evil: to do to others what we would not want done to us.

God could be evil, and if so, we would be at His whim and mercy with no rights, no standing, and just existing for His pleasure. This kind of God would be very selfish, very insensitive, manipulative, deceitful, and distant and have, what most of us would call, a perverted lust for morbid entertainment. These verses tell us plainly that the true God is not entertained by our suffering:

Eze 18:32 "For I have *no pleasure* in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore turn and live!"

Eze 33:11 "Say to them: ‘*As* I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have *no pleasure* in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’

If God is Holy, and the Bible is very clear that one of His immutable attributes is that He is Holy, then the idea of Him being evil is wrong. God states that He has no pleasure in the death, suffering, and destruction of the wicked. If the world’s suffering does not please Him, why does it exist?

Jesus said this:

John 10:10 "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.”

There is be a being (the thief which is the devil, Satan, or Lucifer) who’s full intent and desire is evil. Jesus makes a stark comparison between His motive and the thief (more on this relationship, presence in the world, and influence comes later).

If God claims to be Holy, but we believe He is allowing evil in this world, not stopping it, not intervening when He could, then the whole of the Bible’s witness falls completely apart. The holiness of God is a major reason why sinners cannot be in God’s presence. If He is not holy then the whole salvation story comes undone. If God is not holy then the cross of Christ is useless, a ruse, and just ridiculous!

God, however, claims holiness and that His very nature is love (I John 4:8). The whole revelation story contained in the Bible is not for His benefit, it is for ours. When we come to such tension in the scriptures about God (God is love, but He allows evil), we need to stop and reevaluate what we are saying and believing.

This great tension is encapsulated like this: God is love, God is Holy, God cares for us; yet, the world is full of suffering, death, loneliness, fear, and hate. If God is supreme in power and controls everything, why would a loving God create this world, or allow its suffering to exist in the first place, let alone let it continue?

**We Must Understand Divine Love (and Sovereignty)**

If we look at the world to decide how things operate, we are going to understand a lot, but also not get nearly the whole picture of what is going on—we’ll be misled a lot. The natural world can only reveal so much. We can grasp natural laws, causes and affect, sowing and reaping, reproduction, and many of the processes of life that we can observe. This type of study (normally called science) is very limited.

Naturalism can’t answer basic questions like why we are here, how the universe began, what are consciousness, love, emotion, feelings, desires, thoughts, visions, and imaginations, essentially all of the unseen realms of our experience in life. Most of life’s meaning, purpose, and fulfillment are derived from the unseen, not the seen. In other words, science can’t answer the meaning of life. It can’t be tested or observed in a test-tube. Another example, information itself is a non-physical entity and can only be represented by or in physical things; however, if those physical things are destroyed, the information remains—albeit, unseen. The natural world, science and especially evolution, have nothing to offer to explain how information arises, remains, and fill the whole universe.

Our understanding of love from naturalism must be judge from our experiences with the unseen realm that is manifested in physical actions. We can verbalize it, we can express it with touch, etc. but we cannot bottle it. It is an unseen force. It is experienced as an invisible attribute manifesting in form and shape from another human being, to apply what I’m saying.

Most of us have a good idea of what love is, but why? Animals can feel it, but they can’t understand it. They enjoy its benefit, but again, what do they really grasp? As human beings, we have this given ability to understand love. Somehow we know it when we see it and have some kind of innate comprehension to have a definition for it. There is in most of us, the acknowledgement of this intrinsic value called love. We all seem to have this human consciousness of a moral good and evil that is the basis of understanding love. We all seem to have this communal sense of what love is; however, our human condition (sin nature) of selfishness, greed, and willfulness, often distorts and confuses true love characteristics. This means we do not necessarily have a full grasp of divine love and science (naturalism) can’t offer us anything of significance.

**Misconceptions of love**

Many attribute feelings as love itself. If I feel love, then I love. Some have perverted love in this way: as long as you make me happy, I will love you; or, if you do what I need or ask, I will love you. Conditions applied to love are very human (sinful) traits. Conditional love is really law based, performance based, and sets us in a very insecure place.

Another example of love misrepresented is that it will never do harm, injury, or reject someone under any circumstances. The perception is that love would never cast away, go to war, give up on, or send to hell. This understanding of love is very common among people and has often been one of the reasons behind rejecting the God of the Bible. The sentiments are like these: If God is love then He won’t condemn me. In fact, this would argue that God ultimately will save everyone—universalism type of love.

Still another area of misunderstanding love is the ends justify the means. Whatever it takes to get the right done, the outcome desired, or fix the problem to our satisfaction is justified. Therefore, we can lie, deceive, trick, and misrepresent if the motive is good and right. Love may manipulate, be intrusive, cross boundaries, or remove them, in order for it to succeed. This type of love is mixed with lust, greed, willfulness, and a sense of superior reasoning. Since others are not able to see what is good for them, we know what is best. The age old reasoning says things like: “I’ll only tell them what I want them to know;” or, “I’ll get them to believe what I want them to believe.”

There are other examples, but these will suffice to communicate confusion in understanding love. For us to really see what true love is, we need the Bible. We need God’s revelation of Himself. There is no question that studying the Bible is difficult, if not impossible for natural men and women. There is confusion too; however, it is also *very* clear about a great many things. We don’t need to be a rocket scientist to understand God’s love as revealed in scripture.

**What Are The Biblical Attributes of Divine Love?**

One of the first attributes to divine love is it *does not change (Mal. 3:6)*; further, that divine *love cannot lie* (Tit. 1:2; we are back to holiness being intertwined with God’s love). Another major revelation of God’s love is that it is *unconditional* (Jer. 31:3). God loves us, period.

Three major themes: it does not change, it cannot lie, and it is unconditional. But that is not the end of what divine love is.

As already stated, divine love is holy. Holiness is mingled with justice (Duet. 32:4) and then, when we add the equally true attribute of mercy (Ps. 37:6), we are going to begin to experience tension. There is no way that human beings are going to perceive God without tension. Divine attributes do that to us. We do understand and we don’t at the same time.

God is eternal (Deut. 33:27), I get it, but I don’t in any possible way fully grasp what eternal is. I can’t wrap my mind around always been and always will be. I can see a linear line going in opposite directions as far as my imagination will let me, but then it is eternally beyond that. Add to this, all knowing (I John 3:20). I’m glad God is, but that also makes me crumble to realize there is nothing that is ever going to happen, come into being, or new knowledge that God doesn’t know. I can’t think about it too long.

I could continue along these lines with all of the divine truths about Him, but I think it is clear by now how this tension exists in us—and it is a good thing! It is good in this way: I would be disappointed (even frightened) if God *did* have a beginning and didn’t know everything; at the same time, it overwhelms me and puts fear in me about Him. I’m comforted and troubled about it. If I didn’t stop thinking along these lines, I think I might go crazy!

**Divine Love Tension**

God’s love is perfect (II Sam. 22:31). It is the true balance of mercy and justice. God’s love is not needy, self centered in longing for attention. God doesn’t need praise or worship. We are commanded to praise and worship for our benefit. Our worship of Him makes us conscious, trusting, and faith filled concerning who He is to us!

His love motivated Him to create life and share it with us. God’s love created us in His divine image (Gen. 1:26): spirit, soul, and body. He gave us life like He would want it if He were human. We get to see and know God. We get to commune with His love. We are His glory and He makes His spiritual home in our hearts. We are meant to be God containers!

As beautiful as God’s love is, it also contains justice, truth, honor, loyalty, and integrity. God doesn’t speak idle words (Matt. 12:36), He doesn’t waste time or intentions, and He doesn’t say one thing and mean another. Faithful and true are divine attributes that bring meaning to us especially as we experience much unfaithfulness and lying.

If God’s love is perfect and it is impossible for Him to lie, in recognizing this truth in His character towards us, we’ll begin to understand how He set us up in this world. When God decided to establish human dominion in the earth, He was setting up a situation that would *limit His authority and power*. God, who is all powerful and sovereign in all respects, chose to subject that authority and power through humanity. God gave us not only free-will, but dominion. We were to rule and reign through His glory upon the earth.

De 30:19 "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…” (Emphasis added)

What seems to confuse so many of us is the witness of God in scripture concerning His sovereignty. Who can stand against the Lord (Rom. 8:31)? There is no other God, but God (Isa. 45:21). The truth is that once God gave us dominion, He could no longer govern, override it, take it back, or steal it. When we accuse God of allowing what goes on in the earth, we are ignoring this dominion issue completely.

**Dominion and Sovereignty: Adam and Eve**

Dominion means we have authority, the right to choose, and the free-will to decide. There is nothing God *will* do to stop it—it is illegal for Him to do so. From the very first book of the Bible this is what God did:

Ge 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have *dominion* 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."

Ge 1:28 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."

The Hebrew word for dominion: *Mashal*

1) to rule, have dominion, reign

1a) (Qal) to rule, have dominion

1b) (Hiphil)

1b1) to cause to rule

1b2) to exercise dominion

God actually has the power to stop it, but not the *right*. It is the legal aspect that prohibits God from intervening in this world. The power that stops God is His love, truth, justice, and holiness all wrapped around that fact that He cannot lie. What He decided to give is given. He made human beings kings of the earth. It is like a game of monopoly where each player has powers and abilities beyond the game rules; however, to use them would be cheating. Many human beings do cheat in games when it may change the outcome. Honor and integrity means we will not violate the rules of the game even if it costs us.

In this world, if anyone decides to curse, God cannot stop them. If they decide to cheat, lie, steal, destroy, commit murder, go to war, rape and pillage, God cannot stop it. He has the actual power to stop it, but not the *legal* right. God cannot violate Himself to stop us from choosing the wrong things in life. If there is anyone that is keeping the boundaries and integrity of free will beings in their right to self determination, it is God. We may have the luxury to change our minds when our promise looks like a bad ending; but God does not have that freedom. We are created beings with free-will, even when we violate our own word, the world does not come apart. If the creator violates Himself, what holds all things together would come apart:

Heb 1:3 “…who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the *word of His power*…” (Emphasis added)

Some argue that human dominion somehow diminishes God sovereignty, power, and dignity, so it cannot be true; however, God’s sovereignty is actually channeled through humanity’s exercising of dominion, whether it is for good or evil. When human beings act, decide, behave, or exercise their right to rule in any way, it is God’s sovereignty being used by them. This is a gift of dominion that can be used for good or evil. These verses may help explain it:

Gal. 6:7 “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.”

God is sovereign in the programming laws that govern all of creation. It is like a video game where the programmer has programmed everything in the game; all of the choices, all of the consequences, and all of the risks and rewards are predetermined. What is not predetermined is how a player plays the game. That is the meaning of *“that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life…”* We praise programmers who have been able to put so much real life into their games giving game players real action, real choices, and real consequences, that many of them become somewhat addicted to playing.

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God’s involvement, control, and restrictions against that rule (by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which God forbid them from doing; Gen. 2:17), there was nothing God could do to stop it. Dominion is God’s idea, the test and proof of the forbidden fruit was God making it real. If God did stop it, He would have violated His own word to do it—thus becoming a liar. God cannot lie, He cannot violate Himself, therefore, He could only watch while His creation turned away. If their decision had no consequences, then the whole dominion gift claim would be a sham.

**It Is Just The Opposite!**

When we accuse God of being “unloving” because He allows the evil in the world, we have it backwards. It is because God is faithful and true, true to divine love and true to dominion that evil exists in the first place. Many would argue that God should just override man’s rule to stop us from committing all of the sin, selfishness, greed, and willfulness that causes all of the suffering. God’s integrity may seem petty to us when so much is at stake, but what we really have is someone being so faithful and true. It’s very hard to grasp this immutable integrity because we’ve seen people break their integrity over and again—we all have.

We see compromise and unfaithfulness so much in the human experience. We justify violating our own promises, if life and death are in the balance. We have that freedom (to sin even when it is for good), *God does not*. Human beings are vastly limited, sinful and selfish, we reason according to what is best in our own eyes, we often make decisions we should never make, and we must correct our stances because we are often unaware, prideful and blind, and make very poor gods. When God makes a promise, He has the perspective of all views: past, present and future. He knows what He’s doing, saying, and committing to reality when He decides something.

**The Tension Leads to This Conclusion**

God is not “allowing” any suffering; it is what our rule/decisions have brought. God is not mocked; whatever we sow that is what we will reap. This was set before us. We were born into it. This world is not under God’s control. It is under satanic power and influence. The Bible says that Satan is the “god of this world (II Cor. 4:4).” It is not Satan, or the devils, making anyone do evil; we are all being drawn away into sin filled practices by our own lusts (James 1:14). The demonic just ride us like broncos.

The suffering of our world comes from the curse of the law (Duet. Chapters 27 & 28). The curse is all the things that have gone terribly wrong: sickness and disease, war, violence, stealing, killing, and destroying (including the weather and storms that occur in the earth—as if the car is running, but no one is driving). When unloving, selfish, willful human beings make decisions, the results are what we have in this world. God is not responsible, He is not in control, He can’t stop what people decide to do—that is what dominion means. This is how much God gave to us: a full and complete opportunity to rule and reign in His power. When we (Adam & Eve) lost connection with God, the supernatural power behind our dominion was lost.

**The Law of Genesis: Everything Reproduces After Its Own Kind** (Gen. 1:11, 12)

This point must also be understood: Adam contains the seed of the human race. When Adam fell into sin nature, this meant that his offspring would be born with it (Reproducing after his own kind). Every human being fathered by a human male, is born into sin nature. All of us are born separated from God, not knowing Him, and bound in naturalism.

Jesus was born of a woman (virgin birth: Isa. 7:14; Luke 1:27), not being fathered by a male, making Him fully human but without sin nature. The incarnation works as the God/man substituting and atoning for sin (Isa. 53:5). Adam got the human race into sin; Jesus, the second Adam, gets us out! This is the only way to turn sinners into saints by being born again of the Spirit (John 3:3).

1Co 15:22 “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”

The gospel of Jesus Christ is what God did to restore our salvation. He couldn’t stop it from heaven, so heaven came to earth to atone for sins. In the atonement, God’s justice and truth, love and mercy are satisfied (Ps. 85:10). The cross of Christ fulfills the *curse of the law* and removes the judgments against anyone who calls upon His name (Gal. 3:13; Col. 2:13, 14). This is not automatic because that would violate dominion of persons. The power and authority of God is subject to our receiving Jesus, walking in the Spirit and exercising the authority of His name (Luke 10:19). God operates through us at our willingness.

**Subject To Us!**

Contrary to the understanding that God’s salvation means we lose all control, God sends the Holy Spirit into our lives to support, encourage, empower, and strengthen us to do what Jesus did (John 14:26; John 12:14). God is still not coming into our lives to take control, but work within us, with us, and in cooperation, to get God’s grace and blessings to manifest in our lives (Mark 10:45). God manages to save humanity without taking back dominion—that’s amazing!

Dominion belongs to human beings. Anyone with a human body has authority on the earth. Whoever influences, controls, or intimidates human beings, reigns in the earth. When people die, they leave this realm, leave this earth, and are no longer a force, a potential, or a “player” in the game of life.

God’s intention was for humanity to have dominion and when the fall occurred, it meant that He lost control, influence, and operation in the world through them. The fall is from His grace. Now God had to deal with everyone according to their actions, their behavior, and all of that was based upon keeping the law (the Law of Moses).

The Old Testament centers around a series of agreements between God and individual people like Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to name a few. These agreements, called covenants, were promises made by God with these patriarchs for His will to be done in the world. Through this process, God called kings, priests, and prophets, in addition to the patriarchs, to establish the prophetic material that brought in the Messiah—Jesus.

What we have in short then, is God calls a man (Abraham) to establish a tribe and people in order to provide a lineage for the Messiah to be recognized and birthed into the world. The Messiah’s purpose is to restore fellowship, righteousness, and the new creation of human beings—born of God (Dan. 9:24). This new covenant between God and humanity saves sinners from an eternal separation from God (Heb. 8:13).

Jesus had to become a human being (the incarnation) to offer Himself a sacrifice for all of us (Legitimate substitutionary atonement). Further, as a human being, He had authority to operate, command, and accomplish God’s will like no other. He was sinless, filled with God’s Spirit, and came to show us God’s will, teach about the kingdom, and then provide the only way to the Father (John 14:6). Jesus healed, restored, raised the dead, cleansed the lepers, the blind saw, the lame walked, all showing us God’s will (Luke 7:22). God could work these miracles and signs through Jesus, as a human being; thus, *intervening* in a fallen world of suffering and pain to the degree that one human being could. He didn’t just heal a few, He healed multitudes showing us it was God’s will to alleviate as much suffering as possible while Jesus walked the earth (Matt. 15:30).

We have Old Testament miracles too. They usually revolved around prophets who were anointed by God. God acted to intervene in the patriarch’s lives, Moses the man of God, and the nation of Israel through godly kings, priests, and prophets. This intervention was for the benefit of the whole world to keep this nation and people’s identity from being lost, swallowed up by other nations, and corrupted by sin practices, in order to make sure Christ could be born.

The incarnation reflects this legal entrance and intervention that dominion requires. God’s holiness and righteousness must be satisfied. God’s mercy and truth, kindness and love, also needed to be satisfied. In regards to sinful humanity, these were opposing forces towards us from God.

**Unsolvable Conflict between God’s Holiness and Mercy—Solved!**

God’s holiness and righteousness required everyone to reap what is sowed. Since humanity cannot keep the law (we break it), we were all cursed by it. This meant too that we could not be in God’s presence.

God’s presence was withdrawn from sinners not by just a choice to disconnect, but also so that His glory and holiness did not destroy us. There are several accounts in scripture where sinful men came in contact with God’s presence. The result was instant death (Lev. 10:1, 2; II Sam 6:6, 7). It is like working with electricity and making a mistake to touch a “hot” wire without insulation, we’ll be shocked at least, and likely electrocuted. Since we live in the time of grace and not under law (Rom. 6:4), we do not fear God in this way; this is a change from the Old Testament situation.

God’s mercy, kindness, and love didn’t want us to be separated from Him. The only way to satisfy both was the cross of Christ—that is why Jesus is called the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6). He satisfies all judgment towards in reaping what we sowed in sins; then, He rises from the dead and offers us mercy and life in His name (Col. 2:14, 15). That is the meaning of this prophetic verse:

Ps. 85: 9 “Surely His salvation *is* near to those who fear Him that glory may dwell in our land.

10 Mercy and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed.”

**Now Through Christ in Us, God Can Effect Change**

When God created the earth, He didn’t baby proof it. This world is full of potential, power, inventions, resources, and dynamic and dangerous materials. He created a world we could grow in and grow some more. When man fell that meant that these good things, God gave to us, could now be used for evil. Why doesn’t God intervene? Why does God allow this world to continue?

God has intervened in the most amazing way. What more can God do than to send His only begotten Son to deliver us from sin and captivity to naturalism? Now that He has taken away the sin issue in the cross, we can come to Him, receive His Spirit and operate the way Jesus did while on the earth. He saved us without violating His own oath that we have dominion. He saved us without taking dominion back. That is an amazing effort, *so why did He do this?*

I believe the answer is in this truth: God could have made us robots, pets, servants, or slaves, but He decided He wanted sons and daughters. Sons and daughters cannot be made, they are processed, tested and proved, and must go through this baptism of this fallen world so that real choice and real dominion have meaning.

2Co 6:18 "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."

Sonship and daughter-ship have meaning if the world is real, sowing and reaping is real, and dominion genuinely exists. God restricted Himself in and through us and when Adam and Eve fell; yet, He didn’t leave us to that ending. He came and saved us by His own blood, life, and sacrifice.

2Co 6:2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have *helped you*." Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation. (Emphasis added)

Why doesn’t God intervene? He has to the greatest possible sacrifice there could be. When we see this, it absolutely boggles the mind that God has elevated us in the unsearchable riches in Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:8). We are worth far more than slaves, servants, employees, pets, or anyone or anything else known to us, including the angels of God; we are worth the Son of God (Mark 3:37)!

God doesn’t want sin nature in His kingdom. Who wants murder, stealing, killing, lying, cheating, hating, etc…in their home, let alone our communities? In heaven there is no evil, when evil was conceived in heaven (Isa. 14:12-15), He cast out the evil and a third of the fallen angels with Him (Rev. 12:4). God *intervened* as a flash of lightening, Jesus said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18).” Satan and the fallen angels (demons) are tormented by their eternal condemnation. Further, they are at war with God over the souls of men. They can’t hurt God directly, but they can keep people from finding God through Jesus Christ.

God will put an end to this epic drama (Gen. 6:3). There will come a time when God will stop the madness with a sovereign act to put down a rebellious world and an antichrist leader bent on total destruction of the world. It is called the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:11-21). The scriptures say this:

2Pe 3:9 “The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, *not willing* that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

God is waiting until the last soul comes to Him before He puts an end to this world’s rebellious and evil works. When God stops the world, there is no more salvation; when the game of life ends, so our choice become fixed and decided.

Heb 9:27 “And as it is *appointed* for men to die once, but after this the judgment…”

**Nothing Happens Until Someone Prays!**

God’s integrity in His intervention into our lives is immutable too. God is not like human beings, who will “fudge,” compromise, lie, deceive, manipulate, and cheat. There are times when others may think we are being honest, but deep inside we know we have stretched the truth, left out details, or misled in some way. God declares this:

Nu 23:19 "God *is* not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”

God operates in truth according to His own standard. When God is satisfied and knows that our prayers, requests, declarations in His name, and our commanding of His will to be done in any situation is coming from our whole heart, then He is authorized to manifest His will in our lives. But it’s not just any prayer; it is a prayer that agrees with His will:

I John 5: 14 “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.”

It’s not just any prayer according to His will; it is prayer in faith:

James 1: 6 “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;

8 he is a double–minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

God made covenants with Old Testament saints and intervened in brief but important ways. In the New Testament, God has intervened in bringing His Son, to die on the cross to pay for all sins; when He rose from the dead, He gave us resurrection life (Rom. 6:5). This is the new creation whereby we are now in right standing with God through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:17). This new birth of divine life in us gives us God’s ultimate intervention. He’s come to abide in us, to empower us to command, take authority, and exercise His will in the earth. We are His hands, feet, ears, eyes, mouth, and body in the earth—the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:27). As His body, we, by faith in His grace, operate to call for God’s power to change the fallen circumstances, situations, sickness and disease, and weather just as Jesus did. Jesus said:

Joh 14:12 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father.”

**The Game Changer**

Now when someone asks the question: “Why does God allow suffering?” the focus really has changed from Him, to us. It is the body of Christ that is allowing suffering. It is the believers, who have the authority to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons (Matt. 10:8).

The body of Christ started out in the book of Acts doing this (Acts 5:12); however, as time passed, the believers lost confidence in the grace of God, they were taught differing things, and this authority, for the most part, has laid dormant for thousands of years. There has always been remnants of Christian believers throughout the church age that practiced the power and authority of Jesus’ name. Today, in major portions of believers (body of Christ), in these last days, there has been a resurgence of the grace of God, the healing power of Jesus’ name, and the authority to address the suffering around us.

**The Demonic Issue**

When we consider the reason for suffering in this world, we want to include all of the players. God is first, and as I have been explaining my understanding of His role in our day from the scriptures, His intervention is Jesus. Second, the angels of God are operating in this world to serve those who are inheriting salvation (Heb. 14:1). They operate within God’s will, His grace and our faith.

The animal kingdom is also included in what has taken place in the world. The animal kingdom is fallen too (Rom. 8:22). There is the fallen principle of devouring and being devoured. There is a lot of suffering in the animal kingdom upon itself. Animals were originally vegetarian, after the fall they became carnivores. Suffering occurs when animals attack, bite, infect, or pollute human life. Insects are also included in the animal kingdom and their legacy is huge. Mosquitoes are by far the insect with the most human deaths (hundreds of millions) in our history through various diseases passed on through their bites, such as malaria.

The weather catastrophes have killed millions of people from volcanoes, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis and tidal waves, and flooding. The weather and world’s system has been affected by Noah’s flood. The world before the flood was stable, balanced, and everywhere fruitful (there were no polar regions; a worldwide canopy existed producing a greenhouse affect). That world was destroyed because of the judgment of God upon it (II Pet.3:6), is recorded in this way:

Gen. 6: 5 “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

6 And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

7 So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."

8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”

Note: The evidence of the world wide flood is massive. The water is here in the ice caps and the deep basins of the oceans. If the world were flat, there is enough water to cover it entirely up to one mile. The geological layers consist of sedimentary rock. This means that all of it was laid down by water. The coal and oil beds in the earth have no other explanation for their existence than the rapid burial of plant life and animals. The mountain ranges, the continental plate shifts and drift, required intense powerful forces that do not exist today. This is just a few interpretations of the evidence to validate my claim.

The world since that time has been trying to balance itself. The damage of the flood still rumbles all over the world. The weather is out of control; however, God gave the body of Christ the authority to calm the winds and waves just as Jesus did (John 12:14). These natural disasters exist only because of God’s judgment on sinful human beings that had gone beyond rescue. Noah’s flood is supposed to be a warning to all of humanity (there are over 600 flood legends from all over the world).

The demonic horde invaded the earth when Adam and Eve lost their connection to God. I think this is why movies, stories, and legends about invasion from outer space resonate and fascinate so many. We all seem to know some kind of invasion has taken place and that it is evil.

Evil is in this world. Anyone who denies it is living with his/her head in the sand. There are too many haunted places, haunting people, serial killers, and spiritist. Mediums, soothsayers, fortune tellers, palm readers, psychics, and tarot cards, are demonic oppression or possession. Many today, even in America, have become blinded and held captive against their will to see Jesus, hear and understand the gospel, so that they can believe and be saved (II Tim. 2:26).

The church’s responsibility is to bind their influence, teach the grace of God, and to cast out their oppressive or possessive presence in people’s lives. Jesus said this about them:

John 10:1 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

2 "But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.”

Jesus said that the good shepherd came into the world by the door—being born of a woman. Climbing up some other way refers to the invasion that occurred when Adam and Eve fell. Demons are fallen angels that were cast out of heaven, but came to the earth when Adam and Eve succumbed to the serpent’s (Satan) deceptions (Gen. 3).

Demonic power and rule is through deception, lies, misrepresentation, manipulation, guilt and condemnation, through overwhelming the ignorant, weak, and easily misled. The actual power of the demonic only manifests when they possess someone. The Bible expresses limited powers when this occurs (Luke 8:30). The real power behind their kingdom is the curse of the law.

1Co 15:56 “The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.”

Fallen humanity is bound by naturalism and that means the natural laws. The natural man cannot see spiritual truth, comprehend it, but considers it foolishness. The natural man is blinded by pride, worldly wisdom and is biased against the truth of God (I Cor. 2:24). Jesus said this:

Joh 3:19 "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

The god of this world rules over the blindness and sin captivity of human beings. It is the power of the law that keeps sinners sinning. We reap what we have sowed. The demons prod, provoke, tempt, and lure us because our hearts are already deceitful and desperately wicked. Jesus said that all human beings are liars like their father the devil:

John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

**Concluding**

God is NOT allowing suffering in the world. God cannot take back what He has given in dominion to mankind. God warned Adam and Eve and provided guidance through the Patriarchs, prophets, the Law of Moses, the teaching of Solomon, and more contained in the Bible. God set before us life and death, blessing and cursing and told us to choose life.

God is not responsible for what people decide to do. God’s holiness, justice, and truth are wrapped around His immutable attribute of it being impossible for Him to lie. We must grasp how it is that His love, faithfulness and integrity *are* the reasons He cannot violate Himself, His word, His promise, to override the will of humanity to have His will done.

When we understand what is really going on, we should come away absolutely amazed at the true life, dominion, and free will, He’s given is perfectly applied by Him. He will not override our will to get His done. When He gave humanity the earth, He made us kings of it and of our lives. God is the only one that is completely true to this endeavor, even going to great immeasurable lengths to save us without violating it. Jesus comes as one of us, to save us from our sins. The Lord of all creation becomes human to save humans from our decisions.

Interventions occurred in biblical history as covenants were established through the patriarchs, prophets, priest, and kings. Then, the ultimate intervention to stop the madness is Jesus’ atonement which allows us to be reunited with God and become born again. The church is now God’s body on the earth to do what Jesus did while walking upon it. Each of us can walk in the authority of Jesus’ name and help those we love and those around us AS they are willing to receive it.

Recommended Reading:

***Tension Theology*** addresses many aspects of these issues: Suffering and the Will of God; Does God allow? Is God testing us? Are we waiting on God or Is He waiting on us? Do We Judge or Not?

*Booklets:*

God Is Not In Control

Where Does Sickness and Disease come from?

Why Is There Healing?