

Faith, Hope & Love Part35

1 Corinthians 13:13

Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

Last week was a very difficult teaching and it tried our brains and deeply impacted the emotions of many. This idea of God being responsible for the horrors and atrocities on this earth is a mind numbing reality. But if **God is love** and **He is the Lord and King** (or Master and Ruler) of all the earth (as opposed to some caretaker or overseer who has set things in motion and watches it play out), then everything that takes place in the realm of humanity—no matter how atrocious and horrible it may be—is an expression of His great love. (**1 John 4:8, 16; Joshua 3:11, 13; Psalm 47:7; Isaiah 54:5; Micah 4:13; Zechariah 6:5**). From the perspective of the Kingdom of God, the Lord is always accomplishing His merciful purposes of judgment and blessing in the lives of both believers and unbelievers with the intent of inducing people to turn to Him and cry out to Him.

I am going to continue with this topic to address a few issues that have risen out of that discussion. I also want to make sure you have heard what I am saying and are not filling in any blanks. For instance, if you listen or read carefully last week's teaching you will see that even though Jesus takes responsibility for all that occurs on this earth, each person is still 100% responsible for the choices they have made—including the choices for evil which has produced all manner of sickness

and destruction in this earth. And each person will be judged for their choices. Both statements are absolutely true and work in perfect harmony. They cannot however be reconciled within the confines of our human perspective, they can only be understood outside of time from the perspective of the Kingdom of God and the fact that God sits outside of time and knows in advance every single decision every person will ever make and plans all things accordingly.

So let's ask the obvious question. Is it possible for anyone to do something which the Lord has not authored and commanded? The Bible is replete with statement indicating that all of humanity rebels to the Lord's commands. Asking the same question in a different way, is it possible for some evil to extend beyond God's absolute control? This question drives at the issue of whether or not God just allows and permits evil or is actually in control of the evil that occurs. For some reason, emotionally it seems easier to handle if we think God just permits things but does not command or direct things. But I have to say that the scriptures do not draw those kinds of lines. The Book of Job actually makes this crystal clear. What God permits is synonymous with what He directs. Even though it is an emotional issue for sure, we cannot look to our emotion or our fear to answer this question or to bring an indictment against God, but we have to look to the scriptures.

In answering the question, we will start with the scriptures that are clear and easy to understand and then we will address one that on the surface seems problematic and another that is actually quite easy to understand. And when it comes to good Bible study methodology, we are to always interpret the hard things by what is easy and clear and not the other way around. In fact, we are to always let the easy and clear give us the parameters to interpret the difficult.

Lamentations 3:37-38

Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both good and evil go forth?

Clearly, if it comes to pass on this earth, the Lord has commanded it or caused it and it is not something that He has merely permitted. I say that because the Hebrew verb “*tsavah*” means to constitute or command; and it is in the *Piel* and the *Perfect*. The *Piel* picks up the causative element: God does it. And the *Perfect* represents the action being in its completed state. So nothing comes to pass that the Lord is not personally responsible for directing and completing (He is the beginning and the end).

Psalms 33:10-11

The Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation.

Daniel 4:34-35

For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the

inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'

Even if the nations wanted to do something outside of God's direction, the Lord would frustrate their plans. **Jeremiah 49:19** says "For who is like me, and who can challenge me? What ruler can oppose my will?" Again, God makes the point that no one can do what God does not want done. His counsel stands forever; the plans of His heart and not the plans of man reign supreme. And this is true from generation to generation. He is always in control. People are accounted as nothing; in other words, when it comes to God they have no power, they have no control. Therefore, how could they ever act against His command? **Daniel 5:23** says that God gives us the breath of life and controls our destiny, or literally, in whose hand is all your ways. If in His hand is all your ways, is there anything you can do that He has not approved and directed? Is anyone that big?

Job 31:4, He sees my ways and numbers all my steps.

Proverbs 20:24, Man's steps are ordained by the Lord, how then can man understand his way?

Jeremiah 10:23, I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.

Proverbs 16:9, The mind of man plans his way but the Lord directs his steps.

Proverbs 21:30, No human wisdom or understanding or plan can stand against the Lord. (This means not even a plan for evil).

Job 13:27, You examine all my paths. You trace all my footprints (or literally, you inscribe a print where I must step; you set a limit for my feet).

Job 42:2, I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.

Romans 11:33, For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.

All of these passages are clear and easy to understand. The Lord determines the paths of a person's life, the Lord determines their steps and where they will walk. And no man, nation, ruler, king, or anyone can thwart His will and go outside of His commands. For from Him are all things, not some things—but all things. This would include the wonderful blessings in this life and the horrible terrors of this life. **1 Corinthians 8:6** agrees with this when it says “yet for us there is but one God, the Father, **from whom are all things** and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, **by whom are all things**, and we exist through Him.” All things come from God. If not, He would not be Lord and He would not be in control. Accordingly, even people's rebellions to the Lord's desires for their life are not outside of His rule and majesty and direction. **Ephesians 1:10-13** says, “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose **who works all things after the counsel of His will**, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.” And **Hebrews 2:10** says, “...for whom are all things, and **through whom are all things.**”

In all of these scriptures, there is not any language of exception. God is in absolute control all the time and He works **all things** after the counsel of His will.

We need to settle on this truth. God is love and God is the Lord. Let's now look at the two scriptures that implies that perhaps it is possible for someone to do something which the Lord has not commanded. First we will turn to ***Zechariah 1*** and we will look at this verse in the NASB, the NLT, and then a literal translation of the Hebrew. I want you to grasp the problems that come at times with translation.

Zechariah 1:14-16

Thus says the Lord of hosts...But I am very angry with the nations who are at ease; for while I was only a little angry, they furthered the disaster." (NASB)

...But I am very angry with the other nations that are now enjoying peace and security. I was only a little angry with my people, but the nations inflicted harm on them far beyond my intentions. (NLT)

...And [with] great wrath I am enraged against the nations who are at ease, for I was a little enraged, and they assisted [or literally helped] for evil.

In this passage, the Lord makes clear that those who hearts are bent towards evil, He will judge because they made it possible for the Lord to use them for evil. Specifically in this case, the nations of the Babylonian empire. Jeremiah explains this for us. In ***Jeremiah 25*** the Lord first addresses why He is going to use Babylon as His servant to judge the nation of Israel; and second, He says that when it is all

said and done He will judge Babylon for their iniquity and the moral evil that was in their souls when they came against the nation of Israel.

Jeremiah 25:8-13

Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, “Because you have not obeyed My words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,” declares the Lord, “and I will send to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, **My servant**, and will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them and make them a horror and a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. Moreover, I will take from them the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,” declares the Lord, **‘for their iniquity**, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation.

The word “iniquity” is speaking of the innate corruption and evil in the souls of the Babylonians. This is not speaking about their behavior. The word is a noun and it is not a verb. It is what they are and not about what they have done. It is the same Hebrew word that is used when David said in ***Psalms 51:5***, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin my mother conceived me.” And because the Babylonians

were evil, they literally “advanced” evil or “helped” God, as His servant, with an evil intent (***Zechariah 1:16***). And they did some nasty stuff to the people of Israel, but it is not for what they did but what they are that they were judged. Accordingly, I do not think that ***Zechariah 1:14-16*** can be understood to mean that the Babylonians were able to perpetrate evil that was outside of the Lord’s direction and control. But evil was in their hearts and for this they were severely judged. These verses support the notion that all things are commanded and directed by the Lord of Heaven’s Armies; yet, still He will hold each person/nation accountable for the evil they have chosen to embrace.

The next verse comes from ***Deuteronomy 18:14*** which says, “For those nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do so.” Well, we know the people of Israel, in time, fully subscribed themselves to such wickedness. Does this mean they were able to perpetuate evil beyond God’s control? No. The language clearly means that God forbid such practice, but it does not mean that He prevented them from doing it and yet somehow they still found a way. It was a law, a rule, and we know mankind breaks God’s rules all the time because God has given us a choice to obey or to rebel; in love He does not force anything upon us. When it says, “the Lord your God has not allowed you to do so” the verb “allowed” is not in the *Piel* or the causative. This means God did not force them to not do this bad stuff; He gave them a choice to honor His law or not. They did not go outside of His control; they just rebelled to His law as all man does.

Proverbs 16:4 says, “The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil.” If He is the Creator of all things even the wicked and

evil, then how could it be possible for a created being (who is clearly lesser in power than his Creator) to do anything which the Creator has not directed and allowed. It's not possible! Hence, Paul's argument in **Romans 9** about us merely being the clay and the potter (God) can do whatever He wants with His clay. Jesus is Lord, so the buck stops with Him. So then you might ask, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" "Or is there injustice with God?" These very questions were also addressed in **Romans 9** and Paul answered it by saying, "Who are you, O man, who answers back to God?" And in terms of there being any injustice, he said, "Of course not!" I think it is important to keep in mind that God always works in the context of human choice, which is a foundational aspect of love. If God were to force anyone to choose anything or to be anything, it would not be love. Hence, He lets people choose to love Him or reject Him, to live for Him or to live for the evil in their soul. And because of all the choices we have made and will make for evil (which God knows beforehand), He can direct our actions of evil to accomplish His purposes of love and mercy.

Now even though Paul's answer seems a bit harsh, you must understand it in context of **Romans 9-11** which speaks of God's mercy and love. I want you to think about all that we have learned about generational sin and then consider that in **Matthew 27:22-25** we are told that the Jews demanded that Pilate crucify Jesus. Pilate knew Jesus was innocent so he publically washed his hands of Jesus' blood. "And all the people said, 'His blood shall be on us and on our children!'" Can you imagine? The people of Israel literally cursed the Son of God, condemned an innocent man to die, and then took within themselves, and all the generations to come, the full responsibility for His murderous death. This sin has been passed

down generationally and has corrupted the mind and the heart of the Jew. **Romans 10-11** deals with this issue and how God will use the evil in the hearts of the Jews and the redemption of the Gentiles to ultimately free the Jews from this curse and bring them mercy. First, He hardens the hearts of the Jews. "As the Scriptures say, "God has put them into a deep sleep. To this day he has shut their eyes so they do not see, and closed their ears so they do not hear" (**Romans 11:8**). Second:

Romans 11:25-32

I want you to understand this mystery, dear brothers and sisters, so that you will not feel proud about yourselves. Some of the people of Israel have hard hearts, but this will last only until the full number of Gentiles comes to Christ. And so all Israel will be saved. As the Scriptures say, "The one who rescues will come from Jerusalem, and he will turn Israel away from ungodliness. And this is my covenant with them, that I will take away their sins."

Many of the people of Israel are now enemies of the Good News, and this benefits you Gentiles. Yet they are still the people he loves because he chose their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For God's gifts and his call can never be withdrawn. Once, you Gentiles were rebels against God, but when the people of Israel rebelled against him, God was merciful to you instead. Now they are the rebels, and God's mercy has come to you so that they, too, will share in God's mercy. For God has imprisoned everyone in disobedience so he could have mercy on everyone.

Thus, even in the hardening of the heart of the Jews, for which God takes complete responsibility, we are told it is for our benefit (to build us up in Christ and purify us as they are used as tools of evil in our life) and eventually it will all come around where our salvation will lead to their jealousy and their desire to have what we have. And in the end all Israel, all those chosen of God, will be saved by God's love and mercy. But to accomplish this glorious purpose, it has taken generations and generations of Jews being locked down in their own blindness and rebellion as God purges the wickedness from their souls. His judgment is an act of His mercy as He shows mercy on everyone. He is cleansing the Jews for the day they will be able to finally see and receive. And we are told that day will be a blessing to us and for the whole world.

Romans 11:33-36

Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways! For who can know the Lord's thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice? And who has given him so much that he needs to pay it back? For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. All glory to him forever! Amen.

When you look through human eyes at this issue of God being responsible and directing the affairs of humanity and our being fully accountable for our choices, it is a very hard truth and one that can hardly be stomached much less understood. With issues in this world from sex trafficking to the brutal wars in all parts of this

world, this is emotionally hard. But that is why we must never let emotion sway us. Again, we are told to set our mind on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, for our true live is hidden with Christ in God (***Colossians 3:2***). And with His perspective of mercy and love, we can understand how God works with the evil in the hearts of all people to accomplish His purposes in their lives and the lives of the Beloved. **God is love and the Lord of all.** Even in allowing vessels fitted for wrath to be born in this world He is performing an act of love. He honors the covenant of choice He made with them. He does not just judge their soul outright; rather, He gives them, within the context of time, the right to choose even though He knows they will never ever choose Him.

Finally, if God was not in 100% control of all things at all times, if there was a possibility for anyone or anything to extend evil beyond something He directed and authorized, then every single one of us should be very, very afraid. Every single one of us should live with a healthy paranoia not sure when that person will extend beyond God's reach and do something awful to us. It is a horrifying thought. Yet, God says over and over and over: "Do not Fear," "Fear not," "Do not be dismayed," and "Be anxious for nothing." He says these wonderful words because He assures us that He upholds our right hand in His righteous right hand of power (***Isaiah 41:10,13***). And if we are in His right hand of power, nothing and I mean nothing can hurt us or do anything to us that He does not direct and permit. We are safe always, which is why He commands us to be anxious for nothing. He does not want us to be deceived into thinking that someone somewhere will ever figure out how to do something outside of His plan. No one can. He is the one who hurts and wounds us and He is the one who binds up our wounds and heals us. Only Him.

Now consider the implications of this truth. If we really accept the fact that God is love, then it will completely wipe out the victim mentality that lives in our souls—it will eliminate it. The victim mentality runs deep in the bloodline of all humanity and it spawns all sorts of ugly entitlement and relational indulgences. At the core of our souls, we still believe that what has happened to us is unfair, not right, and was patently mean. And this wrong belief has been the means of justifying so much ugly and entitled behavior. Our reactions to this truth that God is love and is responsible for every evil thing that has happened to us spotlights this reality. At some level we are still emotionally tied to our pain and we do not fully believe that what happened to us was entirely love and mercy. We can know the “truth” and even repeat it, but again at some deeper level it has not yet become our truth. We do not yet accept that every little bit of evil that we have endured came from the hand of God and was to save us, free us, heal us, and to give us life. What has happened to us is good, pleasing, and perfect and it has led to the place where we can be lovers of God and lovers of the Beloved. Accordingly, our hearts should swell with thankfulness and joy. Praise should flow from our mouths. Complaining, bitterness, jealousy, malice, envy, anger, entitlement, self-protection, and all other disgusting selfish survival mechanisms will be purged from our soul when we choose to believe that God is love.

Job was one man who did not let the victim mentality destroy his soul because he was absolutely convinced that His God was in control of all that happened to Him. And in terms of bad things happening to people, he had it bad. In one day, both nature and man chose to come against Job, destroy his life, and advance evil. Fire from heaven burned up his animals and his servants. A wind swept in and

crushed the house where his sons and daughters were celebrating and they all died. The Sabeans killed his servants and stole his possessions, the Chaldeans did the same; they murdered, stole, and destroyed. Yet, from the perspective of the Kingdom of God, we know from **Job 1:1-12** that God gave permission for Satan to go and destroy Job in this manner and it was Satan himself who inspired the Sabeans and the Chaldeans to murder, steal, and destroy and it was Satan who brought about the natural disasters. So who is truly at fault?

The evil that was in the Sabeans and the Chaldeans went crazy and they were on a bloodthirsty raid. We also know that somehow Satan is able to manipulate the things of nature to destroy. Yet, Job does not even acknowledge these instruments of evil. In **1:20-22**, Job falls to the ground and worships God and says, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” Then it continues to say that in all this Job did not sin nor did he “blame” or accuse God of doing something wrong—literally in Hebrew, ascribe to God foolishness. Unlike most of us, Job never did believe that God was being mean and cruel. He just did not understand it. Job also did not blame the Sabeans, the Chaldeans, or even Satan. In **Job 21:4**, he says, “My complaint is with God, not with people.” He correctly laid all the responsibility for his pain at the feet of the Lord. “The Lord has taken away.” Using the title “Lord” Job acknowledges that everything comes from God’s hand; and God said Job did not sin in making this statement. Therefore, whether evil is perpetrated through a direct act of God or an act performed by the agents of God (whether demonic or human), it is still all God.

Then in **Job 2:1-10** we find that God once again permits Satan to go and inflict Job, but this time it was against his physical body. Satan smote Job with boils from

head to foot. His wife told him to just get on with it and curse God and die. She also blamed God and not Satan or some natural earthly disease. Job said she was foolish and in **2:10** said: "Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity [*Ra*—evil]?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips." Once again, Job lays all the responsibility at Jesus' feet and in this he did not sin.

With all the horrible things that happened to Job, it would have been so easy for Job to have been a victim, but he let God be God. He was not happy about his suffering and he did not understand that it was love, which who can blame him, but he did not accuse God of wrong nor did he let his pain be a reason for him to act out against others in either an entitled or a "feel sorry for me" way. Job says:

Job 12:7-10

Just ask the animals, and they will teach you. Ask the birds of the sky, and they will tell you. Speak to the earth, and it will instruct you. Let the fish in the sea speak to you. For they all know that my disaster has come from the hand of the Lord. For the life of every living thing is in his hand, and the breath of every human being.

Job 9:21-24

I am innocent, but it makes no difference to me—I despise my life. Innocent or wicked, it is all the same to God. That's why I say, 'He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.' When a plague sweeps through, he laughs at the death of the innocent. The whole earth is in the hands of the wicked, and God blinds the eyes

of the judges. If he's not the one who does it, who is?

Job 16:12-14

I was living quietly until he shattered me. He took me by the neck and broke me in pieces. Then he set me up as his target, and now his archers surround me. His arrows pierce me without mercy. The ground is wet with my blood. Again and again he smashes against me, charging at me like a warrior.

There are so many more things we can go over in the wonderful book of Job, but I think this summarizes it. And if you think even for a moment that Job might have mucked it up, it is important to consider what God said about Him.

Job 42:7-8

After the Lord had finished speaking to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "I am angry with you and your two friends, for you have not spoken accurately about me, as my servant Job has.

Job spoke correctly about God. God was responsible for all the evil that befell Job even though the actual evil events came at the hands of evil men and Satan. And God used it all to bring Job into a deeper relationship with God. In fact, the end of the story explains Job's confrontation with God and how in the presence and wisdom of God, Job could only repent and accept that God's wisdom for his life is

far above his own. Job relented of his fight and complaint and said:

Job 42:2-6

I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you. You asked, 'Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorance?' It is I—and I was talking about things I knew nothing about, things far too wonderful for me. You said, 'Listen and I will speak! I have some questions for you, and you must answer them.' I had only heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes. I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance.

Then God blessed Job in the second half of his life even more than in the beginning. And I believe that when we relent to God's wisdom, love and mercy for our lives that we will likewise be blessed. The Lord wants us to rest in this truth that God is love and therefore as the Lord everything that He directs and allows is an expression of His great love for you. This truth is why we are always safe and why we do not have to fear, worry, or be dismayed. Every single evil that has occurred in your life occurred in order to bring you life. He is love. Next week we will talk about what it means to be enfolded or perfected in this love.

Let's Pray