

Quarter One: God's Love and Justice

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Lesson 8—Free Will, Love, and Divine Providence

Sunday: Our Sovereign God

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- **Last Week:** “The Problem of Evil”
 - How do we reconcile an all-powerful, good, loving God with the presence of evil in this world?
 - Don't try to downplay evil in seeking to understand why it exists
 - Recognize that there is much we can't understand (much behind the scenes)
 - Skeptical theism – skeptical regarding the human capacity to understand God's reasons regarding the evil in the world (the sanctuary: Ps 73, as a key)
 - Freewill defense – God is not to blame for the evil; humanity is given the gift of free choice (which can also be abused)
 - Love & Evil: we have free will because of will, but its misuse leads to evil.
- **This Week:** “Free Will, Love and Divine Providence”
 - Free will, love & divine providence
 - Not providence in the sense of predestination (and no free will)
 - God orchestrates events, but still gives us free will
 - Great Controversy
 - Gift of free will abused
 - Gen 3 – fall of man
 - From Thursday lesson last week: “God allows evil (for a time) while passionately despising it, because to exclude its possibility would exclude love, and to destroy it prematurely would damage the trust necessary for love.”
 - This week, we study
 - The sovereignty of God
 - Is everything that happens to us God's will?
 - How can God turn evil into good?
 - The omnipotence of God (John L)
 - Can God do anything?
 - What about an apparent or real contradiction in the desire & the answer?
 - The love of God & free will (John D)
 - Love, to be love, must be freely given
 - Predestination and free will (Daniel)
 - God's ideal will vs God's remedial will
 - What God desires to happen vs what actually happens, due to sin & our choices
 - Two dimensional sides of God's providence (lesson) (James)
 - Some things caused by God
 - Some things cause by the free decisions of His creation
 - Is there a 3rd side?
 - God still allows some evil & stops some other evil

- What causes one to continue & the other to stop?
- Why are some miraculously given food & others starve?
- Why are some abused and some rescued?
- Why do some live and some die?
- Thought to consider: “How does God suffer because of the evil in this world?”

Memory Text: ““These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”” (John 16:33, NKJV)

The week in brief:

- 1. **Sunday:** Our Sovereign God (Jill)
 - Multiple Scriptures – is everything that happens God’s will? How do we understand sovereignty? How does free will interact? How can God turn evil into good?
- 2. **Monday:** Pantokrator (John L)
 - Multiple Scriptures – Our God is all powerful & He can do anything that does not involve a contradiction
- 3. **Tuesday:** To Love God (John D)
 - Multiple Scriptures –Love, to be love, is freely given.
- 4. **Wednesday:** God’s Ideal and Remedial Wills (Daniel)
 - Multiple Scriptures – predestination & free will
- 5. **Thursday:** Christ Has Overcome the World (James)
 - Multiple Scriptures – 2 sides of God’s providence

Sunday: Our Sovereign God

Ps 81:11 – 14; Isa 30:15, 18; Isa 66:4; Luke 13:34

- *Story from lesson
 - “God is sovereign” – from youth pastor – “that means He controls what happens”
 - Middle schooler confused: “God was in control when my dog died? Why did God kill my dog?”
 - Youth pastor tried to explain.
 - We go through hard times to be prepared for even more difficult times in the future
 - “One time, it was hard when my dog died. But that prepared me for later when my grandma died. Does that make sense?”
 - Middle schooler thought – long pause
 - “So, God killed my dog to prepare me for when He’s going to kill my grandma?”
- Study sovereignty from a slightly different perspective
 - Do not believe that.
 - Some teach that – God is all powerful; everything happens under His control
 - Yet, He allows things – outworking of free will – but isn’t His will to happen

5 Keys to understanding God’s sovereignty

- 1. **Evil comes from Satan**
 - 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.”
 - Jesus came to bring life – abundant life

- Satan came to steal, kill & destroy
 - We misinterpret God's character: attribute to God what's actually Satan
 - Natural disasters – insurance, “act of God”
 - Car accidents
 - Loss of life; possessions; pain, abuse
- 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.”
 - Satan is the author of hate & murder
 - Satan is the author of lies & deceit
- **2. Goodness, purity, love comes from God**
 - John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.”
 - God is the Author of love – not hate & murder
 - John 16:27 – “The Father Himself loves you...”
 - All of the Godhead loves us (Father, Son, Spirit)
 - John 14:6 – “Jesus said to him (Thomas) I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through Me.”
 - He is Author of truth – not lies
 - 1 Cor 14:33 – “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace”
 - Satan brings confusion; God brings peace
 - John 14:27 – “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”
 - He is the author of Peace
 - Isa 26:3 – “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is **stayed** on You, because he trusts in You.”
 - Stayed = Heb, “to lean, lay, rest upon”
 - 1 John 4:18 – “There is no fear in love, because perfect love casts out all fear...”
 - Satan brings fear; God brings love
- **3. God allows us free choice**
 - Ps 81:11 – 14 – “But My people would not heed My voice, and Israel would have none of Me. (12) So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, to walk in their own counsels. (13) Oh, that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways! (14) I would soon subdue their enemies, and turn My hand against their adversaries.”
 - God knows what's best for us
 - He knows what will make us happy
 - Yet, He still gives us free choice
 - When we refuse (My people would not heed my voice)
 - He allows us to walk our own way (I gave them over to their stubborn heart)

- Isa 30:15 – “For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: ‘In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.’ But you would not,”
 - Love does not force
 - Love calls to us – return to Me and rest
 - Love allows free will – “but you would not”
- Matt 23:37, 38 – “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, 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! (38) See! Your house is left to you desolate;”
 - Triumphal entry
 - They reacted with violence against God
 - He wanted them still – He called for them still
 - He sought to gather them together
- **4. God is all powerful**
 - Jer 32:17 – “Ah, Lord God! Behold, you have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.”
 - Did God save Daniel from the lion’s den?
 - Did God save Jerusalem by killing 187k Assyrians in one night?
 - Did God save the Israelites by crossing the Red Sea?
 - Did God provide food and water for those same Israelites in the wilderness?
 - Did God bring ravens to feed Elijah?
 - Did God bring leprosy and remove leprosy?
 - Did Jesus heal the sick and make the lame walk?
 - Did He raise the dead and comfort the afflicted?
 - Did He cast out demons?
- **5. Why? I am to trust, even when I can’t understand**
 - If God is all powerful and God is love, why does evil and suffering still exist?
 - Free choice
 - The Great Controversy
 - God can work redemptively, even in the midst of pain
 - Conclusion of sovereignty question:
 - Will I still trust my God?
 - Is He love?
 - Is He good?
 - Can I trust Him, even when I don’t understand?
 - Job 13:15 – “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him...”
 - Did God afflict Job?
 - No, Satan afflicted Job, yet God allowed it
 - Why?
- **5 keys to understanding God’s sovereignty**
 - 1. Evil comes from Satan
 - 2. Goodness, purity, love comes from God
 - 3. God allows free choice
 - 4. God is all powerful
 - 5. Why? I am to trust, even when I can’t understand