

MINISTERIO LA FUENTE



RIVERS OF LIVING WATER

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GOD IS GOOD (PART ONE)

Many, many times I've been asked the question, "If there is a God, why does he allow so much suffering in the world?" The question comes in a variety of forms. "If there is a God, why did he permit me to go through such traumas in my childhood?" "If there is a God why doesn't he do something about my failing marriage?" "If there is a God, why are so many people starving?" And so on. But the basic question is, "If there is a God, why is there so much suffering in the world, and why am I going through this trial in my life?"

Any my response has often been, "Your real question is not, 'Is there a God?'; your real question is, 'What kind of God is He?'"

Think about it for a moment. The presence of suffering and trials by no means shows that there is no God; it just calls into question what kind of God He is. God could be a vindictive God taking delight in engineering the suffering of his creations. Or He could be a disinterested God, who despite His all-powerful nature, just allows things to take their course, and turns His back on so much suffering.

It's more difficult to accept the idea of a God who is good, but who allows things to happen that are cruel, and that are many times seemingly inexplicable. It is much easier to imagine Him to be cruel or disinterested; and for some, even easier still to deny His existence.

Many years ago I was preaching on the streets of England and I got into a conversation with a young man who firmly denied any belief in God. I began to point out to him the wonder and marvel of the natural world and how much 'faith' it would take to believe that this had all come about through a series of accidents. Basically I was pointing out to him that there must be a Creator behind all of this. After a while, unable to deny the logic of what I was saying, he began to talk on a more personal level, and open up his heart in terms of his true deep feelings. And he told me this, "I saw my father murder my mother... I don't want to believe that there's a God, because if I acknowledge that there is a God, I will be angry at Him. And I don't want to be angry at God." What incredible honesty, and what an incredible insight into the ways that people think; the ways that people dull or try to escape the pain of the reality that there is a God, who claims to be both all-powerful and good, but who allows such evil things to happen.

So the question is not, "Is there a God?" The question is not even, "If there is a God, why does He allow suffering?". The question is, "What kind of God is He?"

Either God is good, His word is true, and all His dealings are good;

Or God is evil, and His word is a lie.

Behind many of our questions about why God allows trials in our life, and what is the purpose of those trials, is an unspoken fear that maybe the God we find ourselves serving, even the God we find ourselves loving, in reality is somewhat vindictive. This fear is inspired by the innate religious nature of man, the innate sense that there is something we must do to appease an angry God.

It is easy to imagine God to be cruel or disinterested; and for some, even easier still to deny His existence.

Plagued by this unspoken fear, we question, we doubt, we wrestle over God's dealings with others and with ourselves. We seem unable to trust in His word, that He is good, and that any trial He permits in our life is ultimately for our good. Furthermore, plagued by this unspoken fear which many times we don't even understand ourselves, we fail to grasp and to receive the incredible wonder of the fact that God's anger, God's justice (for He is a just God) **has been** appeased and **has been** satisfied.

It was not a disinterested God that took on human form, suffered what we suffer, and was tempted in every way like we are.

The justice was done on His own Son. As the Word of God says in Isaiah 53:10 "*It pleased the Lord to bruise Him...*" It pleased the Father God to bruise His Son Jesus. This is not speaking of a cruel or vindictive God. It is speaking of a just God who **must** punish evil, but who in His love sent His own Son to take the blows, to take our punishment so that we would not have to suffer it. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* (John 3:16) **Our doubts about God's goodness should be laid to rest any time we look at the cross.**

Then, some of our questions about why trials happen in our lives, why God permits certain things to happen, spring from an unspoken fear that while God may be good, He is disinterested. While God may be good, He doesn't want to involve Himself in the daily affairs of our lives. Once again this fear should be laid to rest any time we look at the cross. It was not a disinterested God that took on human form, suffered what we suffer, and was tempted in every way like we are. It was not a disinterested God who chose to suffer at the hands of man, led like a lamb to a slaughter without even opening His mouth, then to the cross, dying as a common criminal despite His innocence.

For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2) What was the joy set before Him? You and I. The joy of knowing that you and I could be forgiven and not have to endure the punishment due to us. The joy of knowing we could be reconciled to God and enjoy an intimate relationship with Him. He is not a disinterested God.

Sometimes, preaching on the streets in England, people would tell me, "If there is a God, and if He loves me, I want Him to prove it to me..."

And many times I would have to say, 'He has already proven it to you. He sent His own Son to the cross, to pay your punishment so that you can be forgiven, so that you can begin a powerful relationship with God right now, right this instant.' **The cross proves that God is good.**

The cross proves that God is loving and not vindictive. The cross proves that God is involved and not disinterested.

Going back to the young man who I described, who had seen his father murder his mother, who didn't want to believe in God for fear that he would be angry at God, my response to him was this. "That's a terrible, tragic thing to have happened. My heart goes out to you. I cannot imagine the pain you must have had to experience and live with. But if you ever meet God, if you ever meet Jesus Christ, His love will be so real to you, that it will swallow up your anger, and it will be a true balm for your hurt. Can I pray for you?"

And there and then, out there on the street, he allowed me to pray for him. He began to open his heart to a God who he by no means understood, but a God who is good, a God who loves him.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. (Isaiah 55:8)

There are things that God permits to happen which we cannot explain...

There are things at times that God asks us to do, that we cannot explain...

There are questions we have that may go unanswered until we enter eternity...

His thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are His ways our ways.

But we must build our lives on this simple foundation: God is good.

God loves me. God is involved. God is good, all the time.

Since the very dawn of time, the very basis of Satan's strategy to destroy people has been to make them question whether or not God is good.

In the Garden of Eden, his question to Eve was, "Has God really said that you shouldn't eat from every tree in the garden? You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat from the tree, your eyes will be opened, and you will become like gods, knowing good from evil." (Genesis 3:1-3) Satan was causing Eve to question God's love, to believe the lie that God was withholding something good from her. She ate from the tree, and death and destruction entered her life and the world.

Her response should have been, "Serpent, I don't understand all the implications of eating from the tree, but my God loves me. He is good, and He has told me not to eat. So I will build my life trusting in His love for me, believing Him and obeying Him. He is good, all the time."

Jesus told us that in this world we would have trouble. *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.* (John 16:33). God nowhere promises to remove all of our troubles. He nowhere promises to explain them all to us.

But, He calls us to overcome, by trusting in His goodness. *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* (1 John 5:4)

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. (1 John 4:16)

Look at the cross, and remind yourself that God is good. He loves you and He is good, all the time.

The cross proves that God is good.

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"IF ANYONE THIRST, LET THEM COME TO ME AND DRINK" - JESUS (JOHN 7:37)