

*Is God in*

**CONTROL?**



**Glenn Wenger**

# *Is God in control?*

Can God be in control of a world that seems to be out of control? When evil is called good and good is called evil and the innocent suffer while the wicked triumph, we sometimes find God hard to understand.

When we turn to the Bible and read the lessons left us in the book of Job, we begin to understand that even though our finite minds cannot fathom the infinite purposes of God, we can still surrender in faith to Him and say with Job, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” We can with those mentioned in Hebrews 11 continue on, “That they might obtain a better resurrection,” even when we cannot understand God’s purposes.

*Understanding the root and nature of our questions can give us the answers - or prove that we are not qualified to ask the question.*

## **How can there be a God in Control - With all the Evil and Suffering that Exists in the World?**

If there is one universal theme used by atheists and skeptics as “proof” that there is no God, it is the question we have given above.

Maybe we should bring this question closer, and point out that it is a question that even shakes the faith of believers in times of severe trial. Believers have given up the faith on account of this question.

We only need to look at a few well known events in history to understand the reason for the question. As examples we might think of Hitler’s “final solution” of extermination for the Jews, or the Christians who were burned at the stake to light Nero’s gardens at night.

When we think of the inhumane tortures endured by people down through the ages at the hands of the wicked, and how the wicked triumph while the innocent are victimized, the question comes: “If there is a God in control, why does it appear that He is not in control?”

But let us look more closely at the question itself. It is the recognition of the existence of evil, and the seeming contradiction of trying to combine that fact with the idea of a righteous God in control of everything—when everything seems out of control!

King David struggled with this in many of his psalms.

Even unbelievers recognize the existence of evil and its opposite. The concept of good and evil is of itself a moral law. To say some things are right and others are wrong or evil is to acknowledge a point of reference between right and wrong.

Now if there is a moral law, we are forced to acknowledge that there has to be a moral lawgiver, or the law could not have come into existence.

At this point we see that if the question can exist, it proves the existence of a law-giving God. Merely questioning the question proves the answer.

## **God's Relationship to the Moral Law, and Man**

We have found that although the atheist feels he can disprove the existence of God by pointing out the existence of evil, the very existence of evil is conclusive evidence of the existence of God. But we haven't answered the question that many hearts are still echoing, "How can a just God then allow such evil?"

Following that question comes another one, "How could a righteous God punish eternally in hell fire those who will not believe in Him?"

Many people, not only unbelievers but also Christians question the morality of the Bible's teaching of eternal hell fire as the punishment of unbelievers.

Some denominations, in an attempt to make it acceptable to their reasoning and their idea of a loving God, have instead of denying that unbelievers go to hell, simply changed the definition of hell. Instead of a place where "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever, and they have no rest night or day" (Rev. 14:11), hell is simply being burned up in a fire - annihilation. In other words, Nero's punishment will not be nearly as bad as the pain he inflicted on Christians: the "human candles" with which he lighted his gardens at night.

A follower of one of these denominations then considered it out of character for God to resurrect the wicked for the judgement just to destroy them in torment, so he began teaching that the wicked are not even resurrected at all.

Yet these answers do not satisfy the sincere Christian, simply because they are contrary to the express Word of God. So how are we to solve the paradox of a loving God who does what would be wrong for man to do?

In Genesis two, we read how man received the moral law, by which we determine right and wrong. But God is not under the moral law. What is not right for man is right for God, because man exists for the purpose of bringing glory to God.

## **God has Given us Direction, if not the Answers we Asked for, in the Book of Job**

I believe the book of Job was put into the Bible specifically to answer our questions on this subject. Job had a family, wealth, faith in God, and a fulfilling life of service to his fellowman. Suddenly, he lost everything including his wealth, his children and even his health. In his severe pain he sat in ashes and scraped his boils with a broken piece of pottery.

It is difficult to imagine what Job went through. We might think of it as much the same as if someone's house burned down with their children and all their earthly possessions inside. But I believe the emotional torment would have been worse, because the house burning was caused by some accident. The many events that befell Job were probably calculated by Satan to appear that God had turned against him. It was obviously more than coincidence.

Job's three friends came to "comfort" him, but all they did was accuse him of secret wickedness and of hiding sin in his life, and said that was why God was punishing him. They said God doesn't afflict one who is living right. When Job justified himself, they called him a liar.

In Job's answers, he wondered more about the reason for suffering than about how to endure it. He did not doubt God's existence or His character, but he wondered what was His purpose.

Finally, God spoke and asked Job, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee and answer thou me."

Then God proceeded to ask Job many questions that were far above his ability to understand. **Job wondered about God's purposes for his pain and suffering, and God, with His questions showed Job that there were thousands of things that he didn't know, and just had to take for granted. Job was not God and did not understand the things of God—he just needed to accept them without understanding them.**

There are things we do not understand about God's providence and we need to accept them without understanding them. This is a function of faith.

## **The Essence of Faith**

Until we can let God be God and put our faith in Him, rather than trying to put Him into our faith, we will continue to question and be troubled by the experiences and trials that come to us.

The "faith chapter" (Hebrews 11) tells us that "Without faith it is impossible to please (God)." This chapter tells a story of victory over all odds. It also tells the story of suffering, torture, trials, affliction, and martyrdom.

"They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wondered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented."

So what do we read about these people? Do we find them turning against God because their faith didn't deliver them? No! Tribulation did not lessen their faith— it proved their faith! Trials and suffering are the seedbed of faith. It is not just coincidence that the list of tortures and tribulation is found in the faith chapter.

To those of us who would question, "Why?" "How can God see fit to allow such horrors to befall His people?" Verse 35 says, "That they might obtain a better resurrection."

The modern doctrine of faith is that if we have enough faith we will have health, material prosperity, and will not need to face severe trials. The Bible's version of faith is a trust in God that will bear us up through whatever trial and hardship God will bring us through.

Can we see above our own material and physical benefit or loss in circumstances? Pain, suffering, bereavement, false accusation, etc. can all be part of God's perfect plan. Are we willing to fill the part He has planned for us? Romans 5:3 says: "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;" Our part is to willingly, if not joyfully accept it as His plan, whether it is for our own good, or maybe the salvation of others. We need to in faith recognize that God is good and He never makes mistakes.

-Glenn M. Wenger