

IS GOD IN CONTROL?



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LifeinJesus.net

'Is God in Control?'
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IS GOD IN CONTROL?

Well, of course He is ... but then why do such terrible things happen? OK, maybe He isn't in control ... but He wouldn't be God then, would He? This question isn't an easy one to answer. And it's only possible to answer it once you have the answer to a different one – is God controlling everything that happens?

Black and White

The Bible makes it very clear that God is not controlling everything and the New Testament does not allow for any idea that God sends the bad stuff.

Jesus said in John 10:10 – *'The thief only comes to steal, kill, and destroy. I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.'* Jesus is saying that the bad things come from the devil, and the good things come from Him – it's black and white. He didn't say God sends the bad stuff to help you be a better person as you cope with it. He says the devil sends it.

Another black and white statement is in James 3:15&17 – *'This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, sensual, and demonic... But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceful, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.'* Good wisdom comes from God, while bad 'wisdom' is demonic – it comes from the devil. God doesn't send wrong ideas about things or wrong approaches to situations to test you. Jesus makes it clear – the devil sends it. Everything that God sends is good.

Good is from God and is meant for your good. Bad is from the devil and is meant for harm. Understanding this can help you so

much in life when you need to work out what's going on. Of course, there are times when it's hard to see if something is good or bad – it seems grey. Use these words of Jesus in John 10:10 to help you – *'The thief only comes to steal, kill, and destroy. I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.'* Is something or someone robbing you? If you're sick you're being robbed of health and strength and the ability to live life to the full, so it's from the devil. If someone is making your life a misery, you're being robbed of your joy so it's from the devil. If something is making you worry, you're being robbed of your peace so it's from the devil. If something that happens brings you real joy or peace it's from God. If it's wholesome and life-affirming it's from God. If it helps you to know that God loves you, it's from God.

Free Will

When sin first came into the world through the devil, God made the decision not to wipe it out. He doesn't want people to be puppets on strings or pre-programmed robots. He wants people to choose to love Him and live His way. That's the mark of a real love relationship – being free to love. So even if you are born-again, that is you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, you still have free will. You can choose every moment of every day whether to think, speak and do 'good' or 'bad'. God loves you too much to take away your freedom of choice. (To read about being born-again go to the end of this booklet.)

In Luke 13:34 Jesus said about Jerusalem – *'How often I wanted to gather your children together ... and you refused!'* God does not force His will on people – they have free will to refuse His way. He's not controlling their response.

God Isn't Controlling Everything

Because God has given everyone free will, lots of things happen in the world which are not what God wants – not His will. When Jesus's close followers asked Him to show them how to pray, He gave them the prayer that is now called 'The Lord's Prayer'. In it, in Luke 11:2, is the line – *'May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.'* Now think about it - if God is in control of everything that happens, why would Jesus say to pray that God's will is done on earth in the same way that it is done in heaven? Surely if He is controlling everything, then His will must already be being done on earth and this prayer would be unnecessary.

In 2 Peter 3:9 the Bible says that God - *'is patient with us, not wishing that anyone should perish.'* God wants everyone to be saved and live with Him for eternity. But Jesus said in Matthew 7:13 – *'wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter in by it.'* God's will is that everyone is saved, but the Bible says many won't be. God's will is not automatically happening on earth.

Jesus never refused healing to anyone. But in His home town of Nazareth He couldn't heal many people at all. Mark 6:5-6 says that He – *'could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people, and healed them. He marvelled because of their unbelief.'* It doesn't say that He wouldn't heal, but that He couldn't because they didn't have any faith in Him. What He wanted couldn't happen. God is not controlling everything that happens.

This doesn't mean that God isn't sovereign. Sovereign means having supreme authority and rank. It doesn't mean automatically controlling everything. God does possess supreme and ultimate power, but He doesn't use it to stop bad things

happening. If something bad happens it's not God's sovereign will. His sovereign will is the decision not to step in and put everything right the minute something goes wrong, or to prevent it from happening in the first place. His sovereign will is that people have the freedom to choose the way they go, whatever the consequences.

God isn't controlling everything that happens. But when bad things happen, His love for you is so great, that He will turn it around and make it work for your good instead of for your harm if you will let Him. Romans 8:28 says – *'We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose.'*

The Devil's' Deceptions

If the devil can get people to believe that bad stuff is from God he's happy, because he knows they will then blame God for it, or be frightened of Him, or turn away from Him. Here are four major deceptions that he uses to try and get you to believe that God sends the bad stuff. Understanding how the devil works is a huge step forward in being able to resist him.

God is punishing you

Before Jesus came, God had given His people the Law. This was a detailed list of rules for daily living which included making animal sacrifices to obtain God's forgiveness for the things people had done wrong - what the Bible calls sin. God hates sin and He couldn't ignore it. It had to be punished and there are examples in the Old Testament of God punishing people. So God was sending bad stuff in those days as punishment to make the people turn away from sin and look to Him. But God never wanted to have to do this because He loves people so much; so

He sent Jesus to earth to die as the very last living sacrifice. He put all His anger and all the punishment on Jesus. It was a once-for-all sacrifice. It covered every person past, present and future; it covered every sin, past, present and future. And it covered all time – it will never have to be repeated. So now God has punished every sin, He no longer has to punish people. The devil wants you to believe that God sends bad stuff to punish you. But Romans 8:1 says – *‘There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who don’t walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.’* On the Cross Jesus suffered all the punishment. God isn’t punishing anyone anymore. In the last days, when Jesus comes again, God will send those who have rejected Jesus into eternal punishment, but for now all the guilt, shame and punishment and anger has already been suffered by Jesus.

God allows bad things so they must be His will

Another deception is that God allows bad things, therefore they must be His will. Wrong - God doesn’t make an individual decision about everything that could happen, whether to allow it or not. He made a single decision after sin first came into the world, not to step in and put everything right, because He will never deny us the free will He created us with. So troubles of all sorts arise, not as the active or passive will of God, but because He is faithful to His original creation. This means that there will always be room for the devil to manoeuvre, but he is stripped of his power unless you give him permission to mess you up. God grieves at the awful things that happen even more than you do.

God sends bad stuff for your good

It is also a lie of the devil that God sends bad things for a good purpose, such as to make you a better person. This thinking leaves people feeling helpless. Of course God is working in you

to make you more like Jesus, but sending bad stuff is not the way He does it. Believing that this is what He does means people can't see what is from God to take it on board, and what is from the devil to resist it. The result is confusion and loss of faith.

God sends bad stuff to test you

If God sent bad stuff to test how you react to it, then He would be tempting you. But the Bible says in James 1:13 – *'Let no man say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God," for God can't be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one.'* It's the devil who tempts you to sin. You need to understand that God is drawing you to choose good things and the devil is trying to tempt you with bad. The devil has many ways to try and get you to do wrong, but they all start with temptation - a voice in your mind that says things like – 'No-one will blame you for being angry', 'No-one will ever know', 'He or she deserves it', 'You've put up with enough', 'It's time to give as good as you get', 'Imagine all the horrible things you want to say to that person'. All temptation comes from the devil.

You can Resist the Devil and Have the Victory

If you reject Jesus and all He has done for you, it's possible for the devil to mess your life up. But if you are born-again, then even though the devil will still try to cause you problems, you can resist him and learn to live more and more in the victory Jesus has won for you. 1 John 3:8 says – *'To this end the Son of God was revealed: that he might destroy the works of the devil.'*

And because of what Jesus has done you have a promise in James 4:7 – *'Be subject therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.'* Even Jesus had to resist the devil three times before he gave up. So don't be discouraged. Keep telling him to

go in the name of Jesus and turn your thoughts away from your problems and onto Jesus. It isn't easy but it is possible. God is with you and is on your side and if you persevere, the devil will go and you will have the victory.

God is in Control, but not Controlling

So where does all this leave the original question? Well of course God is in control. He wouldn't be God if He wasn't. He has a plan for the earth and He will bring it about perfectly and completely one day and it will be at exactly the right time. The day will come when God brings an end to this suffering world and creates a new heaven and a new earth where born-again believers will live in perfect joy and peace and everything that happens will be God's wonderful positive loving will. The devil will not be allowed in. He and all those who have rejected Jesus will be banished to eternal punishment in hell.

But for the time being, part of God's being in control is deciding not to control everything that happens. He is in control, but not controlling. Understanding this brings such freedom. You are able to know what to say yes to in your life and what to resist. You do not have to go through the agony of wondering what God is doing when things go wrong. He is grieving even more than you are at the tragedies of life. But He has a way to bring you through the difficult times and He can work for your good even in the middle of the worst of times.

Never panic – always trust God. He never sends the bad stuff, but be assured He is in control and His perfect plan will come about, and if you are born-again you will be part of it. You have a wonderful joy and peace filled future because God is in control. And you have the possibility of experiencing it even now in this

broken world as you let God lead you and learn to accept the good from Him and reject the bad. 2 Corinthians 2:14 says – *‘Now thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ.’*

Being Born-Again

When you acknowledge Jesus as God and decide to follow Him, you make Him your Lord. When you accept His sacrifice on the Cross for yourself personally, you make Him your Saviour. You are then born-again and have a new perfect spirit. God becomes your Father and you His child, and you can start to enjoy your personal love relationship with Him.

Romans 10:9 says – *‘If you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.’* Tell God you are sorry for the wrong things you do, say and think. Choose to believe that Jesus is Lord, that He died for you and is now alive. Accept Him as your Lord and Saviour. Say it with your voice and believe it in your heart.

If you’ve done that sincerely, you are now born-again and Jesus has come to live in you. Everything you’ve ever done wrong or ever will do wrong is forgiven, and after this life is over, you’ll live in peace and joy with your loving Father God for ever.

As a child of God, you now have a whole new family of brothers and sisters. Tell a trusted Christian that you are now born-again so they can help you in your new life in Jesus. And you have the Bible to help you understand and experience more of God’s love for you and all Jesus has done and won for you. It will help you to live your life in the best possible way – His way.

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and can lose their faith.

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about where God is in the hard times.
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and that you really can trust Him
in every situation.



Katherine Hilditch has been teaching in local churches for many years. In 2013 she wrote her first booklet and since then has written many more. She created her website to make all the booklets freely available to everyone. They can be read online or printed out. Katherine's threefold purpose is to help people understand more about Jesus and all He has done and won for them, to encourage them to go deeper in their relationship with God and to provide material to help them share their faith with others. To read her story and find all the booklets go to –

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