

IS GOD IN CONTROL?



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‘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 we 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 says that bad things come from the devil, and good things come from Him – it's black and white. He didn't say God sends the bad stuff to help us be a better person as we 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... ¹⁷But 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 us. The devil sends such things. 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 us so much in life when we 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 what Jesus said 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.

Authority and Free Will

God created man with free will and gave him authority over all the earth. He said in Genesis 1:28 – *"Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."* When sin first came into the world through the devil, God couldn't just wipe it out without going back on His Word and violating man's free will. He said in Psalms 89:34 – *"I will not break my covenant, nor alter what my lips have uttered."* So man remained in control of the earth until God sent Jesus to win the authority back. Only a man could hold that authority according to God's Word – this is why Jesus had to come as a man and why He referred to Himself as the Son of Man. Just before Jesus went back to heaven He then shared that authority with us. He said in Matthew 28:18-20 – *"All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of*

the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

God made us with free will because doesn't want us to be puppets on strings or pre-programmed robots. He wants us 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 our responses.

God Isn't Controlling Everything

Because God has given everyone free will, lots of things happen in the world which are not God's 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 rank. It doesn’t mean controlling everything. Of course God does possess supreme and ultimate power, but He doesn’t use it to stop bad things happening. His sovereign will is to be true to His Word and allow us free will, even when things go wrong. He will not, or in a very real sense cannot, go back on His Word because He has bound Himself by it. So He won’t put everything right when things go wrong or prevent bad things from happening. But He will work through us as we cooperate with Him and use the authority Jesus has shared with us. God’s 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 us is so great, that He will turn it around and make it work for our good instead of for our harm if we will love Him and cooperate with 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, and be frightened of Him, or turn away from Him. Here are four major deceptions that the devil uses to try and get us to believe that God sends the bad stuff. Understanding how Satan 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 they had done wrong. God hates sin and He couldn't ignore it. It had to be punished and there are examples of God punishing people under the law. So God was sending bad stuff in those days as punishment to make the people turn look for a Saviour. 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 once-for-all sacrifice. He put all His anger and all the punishment on Jesus. 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.*' 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 and we are forgiven.

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 gave man free will and made a single decision to give him authority over the earth. So troubles of all sorts arise, not as the active or passive will of God, but because He is faithful to His Word. This means that there will always be room for the devil to manoeuvre, using lies and deception, but he is stripped of his power unless we give him permission to mess us up. God grieves at the awful things that happen even more than we 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 us a better person. This thinking leaves people feeling helpless. Of course God is working in us to make us more like Jesus, but sending bad stuff is not the way He does it. Believing this means people aren't able to see what is from God to take it on board, and what is from the devil to resist it.

God sends bad stuff to test you

If God sent bad stuff to test how we react to it, then He would be tempting us. 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 us to sin. We need to understand that God is always drawing us to choose good things and the devil is trying to tempt us with bad. He has many ways to try and get us to do wrong, but they all start with temptation – a voice in our mind saying things like – 'It's no big deal', 'No-one will get hurt', 'No-one will ever know', 'They deserve it', 'You've put up with enough', 'It's time to give as good as you get' 'You know you want to'. All temptation comes from the devil, not from God.

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.'*

Because of what Jesus has done we 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 back to 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 flee 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. 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 being faithful to His Word and not controlling everything that happens. He is in control, but not controlling. Understanding this brings such freedom. We are able to know what to say "yes" to

and what to resist. We do not have to go through the agony of wondering what God is doing when things go wrong. He is grieving even more than we are at the tragedies of life. But He is able to bring us through the difficult times and He can work for our 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 accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour you become born-again. God becomes your Father and you His child, and you can start to enjoy your personal 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.’* Say this prayer out loud and believe it in your heart – “Jesus, I declare that You are Lord and that God raised You from the dead to live forevermore. Thank You for dying for me personally. I receive my forgiveness and my salvation now. Thank You Jesus, my Lord and Saviour.”

You are now born-again and Jesus has come to live in you. All your sins are forgiven, past, present and future, and you have a new perfect spirit. And after this life is over, you’ll live in love, peace and joy with your Father God for ever.

Life in Jesus

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When things go wrong many people blame God.
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and can lose their faith.

This booklet will put your mind at rest
about where God is in the hard times.
You will discover that He does love you
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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