

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

These notes are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye, mistakes can possibly be found. Therefore, he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabible.org.

Date: November 16, 2014

Sermon Title: God’s Relationship to Evil – The Study of Theodicy

Series Title: A Study of 2 Peter and Jude

Text: 2 Peter 3:9; Misc.

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in the Storyline of the Bible. She is determined by design to have a God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching focused on personal discipleship through intentional and systematic instruction; a Global-impacting mission that resolves to be a church planting church; and a Grace-based fellowship where disciples are invited to live under a reigning grace characterized by a Gospel-driven sanctification that celebrates a divine monergism to the Christian life.

Date: November 16, 2014
 Title: God's Relationship to Evil – The Study of Theodicy
 Text: 2 Peter 3:9; Misc.
 Theme: God's control enables us to find rest in our tragedy.

Introduction:

In our study of 2 Peter 3:9, I made some comments concerning the will of God. It is my desire to expand on this theme as it is found throughout the Word of God.

"Small matters matter. The little things in life can make a big difference. George Will writes, 'Suppose the car had hit the pedestrian slightly harder. What car? The one on Fifth Avenue the evening of Dec. 13, 1931, when an English politician on a lecture tour momentarily forgot the American rules of the road and looked the wrong way when stepping into the street. Winston Churchill could have died. Then, perhaps in 1940 or 1941, a prime minister less resolute . . . than Churchill might have chosen to come to terms with Germany before Hitler attacked the Soviet Union. Imagine the hegemony [power] of a National Socialist Germany stretching across the Eurasian landmass from the Atlantic to the Pacific.' Not only is God sovereign over world wars, but he is sovereign over car accidents and everything else as well."¹

Consider with me the following extended quote concerning one author's assessment of what the Bible teaches concerning God's sovereignty.

"To many Christians the idea of God's absolute sovereignty over every event that takes place, no matter how minute, seems laughable. The conception of God as a dignified old gentleman, who only concerns himself with the 'big' matters, and would not get his hands dirty in minor affairs, or else as a cosmic 'watchmaker,' who wound up the universe and lets it keep on ticking, is common. Others would say that, while God is somehow 'sovereign' over everything, he does not actively exercise that sovereignty in directing the actions of men, for to do so would violate the principle of free will, and make people mere robots. But instead of dwelling on these philosophical ideas and objections, we ought instead to examine the scriptures, and see what they have to say on the subject. Fortunately, the scriptures are very clear on this matter. The bible depicts God as the only and absolute King of the universe, who rules over all, and does everything he pleases (Exo 15:18; 1Ch 29:11-12; 2Ch 20:6; Psa 22:28). And not only is he sovereign in some abstract way, in that he retains the right to govern all events actively according to his will, but chooses not to do so; but he actually and actively ordains and brings to pass everything that takes place on the earth (Deu 32:39; 1Sa 2:6-8; Job 9:12; 12:6-10; Psa 33:11; 115:3; 135:6; Isa 14:24; Isa 45:7; Act 15:17-18; Eph 1:11). From the smallest matters of 'chance,' such as the casting of a lot into the lap (Pro 16:33), to the greatest events of the earth's mighty kingdoms (e.g. Isa 45:1-4), God is bringing all things to pass according to his will. He governs and superintends 'coincidental' happenings (1Ki 22:20, 34, 37), the wicked actions of men (Gen 45:5; 50:20; Exo 4:21; Jdg 14:1-4; Psa 76:10; Pro 16:4; 21:1; Isa 44:28; Amo 3:6; Act 2:22-23; 4:27-28), the good deeds of men (Joh 15:16; Eph 2:10; Phi 2:12-13), the actions of both evil spirits and good angels (1Sa 16:14-16; 1Ki 22:19-23; 1Ch 21:1/2Sa 24:1; Psa 103:20-21; 104:4), the habits of animals (Num 22:28; 1Ki 17:4; Psa 29:9; Jer 8:7; Eze 32:4; Dan 6:22), and the operations of all creation (Gen 8:22; Psa

104:5-10, 13-14, 19-20; Mar 4:39). The bible is clear that God is in no way culpable for evil (Jam 1:13), and that humans are all morally responsible for their actions (Ezek 18:4); so we must not let our understanding of God's sovereignty tempt us to minimize these truths; however, the bible is equally clear on the matter of God's active governance in and through all the actions of men, and we must not deny this either. If we err in one direction or the other, we must set our errant thought aright by looking to the cross, where God accomplished his intention for the ages, which he had planned before the world began; but he did so through the most morally reprehensible and culpable actions ever done, in the betrayal of Judas, the false witnessing of the Jews, the cruelty of the Romans, etc. (see Acts 2:23; 4:27-28)."²

Is this author right in his assessment of the biblical record? We will go to the Scripture in a moment to determine for ourselves the validity of such conclusions.

“God is certainly sovereign over evil. There’s a sense in which it is proper even to say that evil is part of His eternal decree. He planned for it. It did not take Him by surprise. It is not an interruption of His eternal plan. He declared the end from the beginning, and He is still working all things for His good pleasure (Isaiah 46:9-10). **But God's role with regard to evil is never as its author. He simply permits evil agents to work, then overrules evil for His own wise and holy ends. Ultimately He is able to make all things-including all the fruits of all the evil of all time-work together for a greater good** (Romans 8:28).”³

The Storyline:

In God’s *Story*, sin appears rather early in the narrative. Is sin’s presence purely the outworking of human freedom or is the presence of sin part of God’s eternal *Story*? Our desire in this study is to put the study of God’s relationship to sin in the larger context of His right as God to rule and govern all He creates.

The Problem:

1. Why are these passages difficult? How is God described in these passages? How is man described in these passages?
2. Can God be culpable? What is culpability? If God determines evil, is man still responsible? What is responsibility?
3. If God is in control, then what are the implications of this for our lives?

The Problem:

As image bearers, we struggle with the idea of someone or something running and controlling our circumstances.

Outline:

Why would a good God permit the entrance of sin into a perfect universe? This question has puzzled thoughtful people for centuries. There is no truly adequate answer. Man does not

have the capability of answering the question because of his finiteness and sin. Furthermore, the Bible is silent.

The intent of this study is to show how the promise of a future seed colors and controls our understanding of God's rule over our affairs. Apart from this understanding, we will resist this idea.

The Bible reveals a God who controls everything. There are no exceptions. Whether it is life or death, good or bad, God is involved and working all events out according to His plan. Somehow His rule excludes culpability. Such a conclusion is only possible because God is not answerable to anyone or anything outside Himself. When the absolute sovereignty of God is noted, all of the other questions confronting us appear to dissolve.

Let us begin with broad observations and then narrow it down into specific areas.

I. We see God's control over life.

- ²⁷ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ God blessed them; and God said to them, "**Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over** the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Gen. 1:27, 28)

God gave Adam and Eve instructions to reproduce after their kind. Such activity would place "icons" throughout the created order whereby reminding the inhabitants of who ruled over everything.

The Bible uses such language as "opening the womb" and "withholding the fruit of the womb."

- Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and **He opened her womb**, but Rachel was barren. (Gen. 29:31)
- ¹ Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, "**Give me children, or else I die.**" ² Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "**Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?**" (Gen. 30:1, 2)
- Then God remembered Rachel, and God gave heed to her and **opened her womb**. (Gen. 30:22)
- ⁵ but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, **but the LORD had closed her womb**. ⁶ Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, **because the LORD had closed her womb**. (1 Sam. 1:5, 6)

The Psalmist speaks of God fashioning humanity within the womb (Ps. 139). The Bible does not leave any question as to God's involvement in conception. Anytime we opt to circumvent God's declared will for us either in marriage or in conception, we must cautiously consider what parameter's God establishes within His Word for direction.

Yet not only is God acknowledged as the one controlling life, He is also the one who controls death.

II. We see God's control over death.

The incident with Er and Onan highlights not only their disregard for life, but also God's involvement in their death.

- ⁷ But Er, Judah's firstborn, was evil in the sight of the LORD, **so the LORD took his life**. . . ¹⁰ But what he [Onan] did was displeasing in the sight of the LORD; **so He took his life also**. (Gen. 38:7, 10)
- The sons of Judah were Er, Onan and Shelah; these three were born to him by Bath-shua the Canaanitess. And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, **so He put him to death**. (1 Chron. 2:3)

Their death is a consequence of their desire to control life. They refused to "be fruitful and multiply." This idea ties to the Seed Promise. Their refusal to sustain offspring was a rejection of God's promise to provide a Seed of deliverance.

From this narration, we should not conclude all death is a consequence of immediate sin and judgment. However, we would be amiss if we did not put God squarely in control of such things.

This same idea occurs with Nabal the husband of Abigail (1 Sam. 25:37, 38).

- ³⁷ But in the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him so that he became as a stone. ³⁸ About ten days later, **the LORD struck Nabal and he died**. (1 Sam. 25:37, 38)

This same idea occurs when David numbered the people (2 Sam. 24:17).

- Then David spoke to the LORD **when he saw the angel who was striking down the people**, and said, "Behold, it is I who have sinned, and it is I who have done wrong; but these sheep, what have they done? Please let Your hand be against me and against my father's house." (2 Sam. 24:17)

This same idea occurs in the passing of the prophet Ezekiel's wife (Ezek. 24:15-18).

- ¹⁵ And the word of the LORD came to me saying, ¹⁶ "Son of man, behold, **I am about to take from you the desire of your eyes with a blow**; but you shall not mourn and you shall not weep, and your tears shall not come. ¹⁷ Groan silently; make no mourning for the dead. Bind on your turban and put your shoes on your feet, and do not cover your mustache and do not eat the bread of men." ¹⁸ **So I spoke to the people in the morning, and in the evening my wife died**. And in the morning I did as I was commanded. (Ezek. 24:15-18)

This same idea occurs with King Herod in Acts 12:21-23.

- ²¹ On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them. ²² The people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" ²³ And **immediately an angel of the Lord struck him** because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died. (Acts 12:21-23)

Without choosing to be exhaustive, one can readily see how the idea of God's sovereignty in death is noted.

The larger intent of this study is to see how God works in and through evil acts.

III. We see the Lord's control over random acts (1 Kings 22:34).

When the Scriptures speak of certain man who drew his bow at random, God called him out for this specific task.

- **Now a certain man drew his bow at random** and struck the king of Israel in a joint of the armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around and take me out of the fight; for I am severely wounded." (1 Kings 22:34)
- **The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.** (Prov. 16:33)
- Each man said to his mate, "Come, **let us cast lots** so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us." So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. (Jonah 1:7)
- And **they drew lots for them**, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles. (Acts 1:26)

It is because God controls random acts, we are to give thanks in and for all things.

- always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; (Eph. 5:20)
- in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thess. 5:18)

I do not believe things are random, but ordered and thus orderly even when the act itself makes no sense.

In 1997, I was indirectly struck by lightning. We often sing of God's thunderbolts striking according to His will. Such is the purpose of God. God determined exactly where I would be standing and where the lightning would strike at that exact moment. Even seemingly random acts are not outside His sovereign control.

IV. We see God's control over nations.

¹⁹ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "**Behold, I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.** And he will carry off her wealth and capture her spoil and seize her plunder; and it will be wages for his army. ²⁰ I have given him the land of Egypt for his labor which he performed, because they acted for Me," declares the Lord GOD. ²¹ "On that day I will make a horn sprout for the house of Israel, and I will open your mouth in their midst. Then they will know that I am the LORD." (Ezek. 29:19-21)

God installs in office who He wills to be in office (Rom. 13:1). Such installation comes through human choice or through the tyranny of the tyrant, but it is still God's choice.

V. We see the Lord's control over evil acts.

Many use the study of God and His relation to sin as a means of discrediting Him. Listen carefully to the following:

“One of the most influential and powerful ‘proofs’ that there is no God proceeds from ‘The Problem of Evil.’ This argument claims that the following three statements cannot *all* be true:

- (a) Evil exists,
- (b) God is omnipotent [all-powerful]; and
- (c) God is all-loving.

The argument is as follows.

If God can prevent evil, but *does not*, then He is not all-loving. If God intends to prevent evil, but *cannot*, then He is not omnipotent. If God *both* intends to prevent evil and is capable of doing so, then how can evil exist?”⁴

There are several assumptions in their argumentation.

The first assumption is that an all-loving God would never permit evil to take place. Yet, love is not the absence of evil. God's love for His Son was enormous though it did not prevent Him from sending Him to die for humanity's sins.

The second assumption is that omnipotence would stop evil. Though omnipotence could stop evil should it so choose, it does not demand that evil be stopped. Since omnipotence can control evil, it can use evil for its own end.

The third assumption is that evil serves no purpose. Evil, pain, sorrow, tragedy all have their place. Fatalism denies their purpose, yet Christianity acknowledges the value of such tools when placed in the Master's hand. God is all-wise. **God uses the best means to accomplish the highest good for His ultimate glory and man's benefit.** As a sovereign ruler, He may do as He wills (Rom 9:18-23).

It is obvious (a) that God has permitted sin, and (b) hence, it was right for Him to do so. However, why it was right must ever remain a mystery demanding submission and defying solution.

QUESTION: Why does God let sin happen? Ultimately, God let sin happen in order to glorify Himself. Remember, God is all-wise (Rom. 9:18-22). His reasoning far outstrips ours as to why such things exist. What we cannot know or see, He does.

QUESTION: Could God have stopped sin? Because of who He is, such an answer is immediate and forthcoming, of course. The fact that sin exists assures us there is a greater purpose behind its existence that we are capable of understanding or seeing. God wove into sin an intrinsic demerit. The consequence of sin is separation and death. This was true in Lucifer's rebellion and Adam's rejection. Both faced the immediate consequence of their choice. Attached to the immediate are the long-term consequences should repentance not follow. God dealt with it immediately by casting Lucifer out of heaven and then chose not to terminate it.

QUESTION: Is God the author and thus creator of sin? The short answer is no. Yet in providing such a short answer, we must note that God did will to permit sin to exist. Had God not determined sin to be a part of His single *Story*, sin would not exist. He did not create sin in the same manner of creating all things. This, however, must not keep us from understanding God's purpose with sin. Had He not willed sin into His *Story*, sin would not exist.

For example, the simple idea of a car would not exist had God not determined such into existence. Yet, God did not create the car directly. He did, however, through secondary causation [i.e. the will of humanity] for such to exist.

Nothing exists that is not from Him, sustained by Him, and ultimately for Him. Never can we assume that God is not in control of that which He created. Often, we limit God control only over His people or in events that are pleasing. Yet, God controls everyone and everything, both the good and the evil.

This raises the issue of God's relationship to sin. What one will find when reading through the Old Testament narrative is how the Jewish people presuppose God's control in all of life. In the classic movie, *Fiddler on the Roof*, the "hero" Topol has an ongoing dialogue with God. He reflects the mindset of His people that God is behind everything.

Consider the following passages that cite God's sovereignty in evil acts.

A. We see this in Joseph's captivity (Gen. 45:5-7; 50:18-21).

- ⁵Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, **because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.** ⁶For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. ⁷**God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.** (Gen. 45:5-7)
- ¹⁸Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." ¹⁹But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? ²⁰**As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.** ²¹So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. (Gen. 50:18-21)

B. We see this in the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

- The LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but **I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.**" (Exod. 4:21)
- **But I will harden Pharaoh's heart** that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. (Exod. 7:3)
- **Thus I will harden Pharaoh's heart**, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD." And they did so. (Exod. 14:4)

- As for Me, behold, **I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians** so that they will go in after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. (Exod. 14:17)
- **For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts**, to meet Israel in battle in order that he might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. (Josh. 11:20)

The prophet Isaiah goes so far as to ask, “Why do you cause us to stray from your ways and harden our heart?”

- **Why, O LORD, do You cause us to stray from Your ways And harden our heart** from fearing You? Return for the sake of Your servants, the tribes of Your heritage. (Isa. 63:17)

Many ask what came first, “God’s hardening or Pharaoh’s hardening?” We need to work from the premise that Pharaoh’s heart was already wicked and thus hardened. God did not restrain Pharaoh from carrying out his evil acts.

C. We see this in Job’s calamity.

- ²⁰ Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. ²¹ He said, “Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.” ²² Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God. (Job 1:20-22)

Job is perhaps the quintessential pattern for a supernatural response to natural disaster.

D. We see this in Samson’s rebellion.

- ¹ Then Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines. ² So he came back and told his father and mother, “I saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.” ³ Then his father and his mother said to him, “Is there no woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” But Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, for she looks good to me.” ⁴ However, **his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines**. Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel. (Judges 14:1-4)

Samson’s life is one pocked by poor choices. In them all, God was working.

E. We see this in Abishai’s cursing (2 Sam. 16:9-11).

- ⁹ Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over now and cut off his head.” ¹⁰ But the king said, “What have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruiah? If he curses, and if the LORD has told him, ‘Curse David,’ then who shall say, ‘Why have you done so?’” ¹¹ Then David said to Abishai and to all his servants, “Behold, my son who came out from me seeks my life; how much more now this Benjamite? **Let him alone and let him curse, for the LORD has told him.**” (2 Sam. 16:9-11)

King David accepted Abishai’s cursing as coming from the Lord. We should likewise accept such abuse from others as part of God’s overarching plan.

F. We see this in the David's census (2 Sam. 24:1-4).

- ¹ Now again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and it incited David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah." ² The king said to Joab the commander of the army who was with him, "Go about now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and register the people, that I may know the number of the people." ³ But Joab said to the king, "Now may the LORD your God add to the people a hundred times as many as they are, while the eyes of my lord the king still see; but why does my lord the king delight in this thing?" ⁴ Nevertheless, the king's word prevailed against Joab and against the commanders of the army. So Joab and the commanders of the army went out from the presence of the king to register the people of Israel. (2 Sam. 24:1-4)
- ¹ Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel. ² So David said to Joab and to the princes of the people, "Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan, and bring me word that I may know their number." . . . ⁷ God was displeased with this thing, so He struck Israel. ⁸ David said to God, "I have sinned greatly, in that I have done this thing. But now, please take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly." (1 Chron. 21:1, 2, 7, 8)

Some suggest these are two different accounts; however, it is of interest to read them in parallel. Satan is always under God's sovereign control.

G. We see this in the LORD sending a deceiving spirit in the mouth of the prophets (1 Kings 22:19-23).

- ¹⁹ Micaiah said, "Therefore, hear the word of the LORD. I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left. ²⁰ The LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said this while another said that. ²¹ Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.' ²² The LORD said to him, 'How?' And he said, 'I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' Then He said, 'You are to entice him and also prevail. Go and do so.' ²³ Now therefore, behold, the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the LORD has proclaimed disaster against you." (1 Kings 22:19-23)

This same idea is expressed in 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12.

- ⁸ Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; ⁹ that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, ¹⁰ and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. ¹¹ For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, ¹² in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. (2 Thess. 2:8-12)

It is the same principle of God giving people over to great wickedness in the rejection of Him (Rom. 1:24, 26, and 28).

As it relates to evil, what conclusions might we draw? Let us consider three such conclusions.

1. God prevents sin

He often prevents us from committing folly (Gen 20:6).

2. God allows sin

He limited what Satan did to Job. Satan is a piece in God's plan (2 Sam. 24:1, compare 1 Chron. 21:1; Acts 14:16; Job 1:12). **God is not the author of sin, but the author of free beings who are the authors of sin.** God created man with a nature that is capable of being tempted. God demanded obedience from man. In obedience, there must be the alternative, disobedience. The potential for disobedience was part of humanity's constitution. He did not have to disobey, yet he could if he chose to.

3. God directs sin

God's immutable plan entails the providential outworking of sinful man's evil deeds. He uses sin to His advantage (Gen 50:1, 7-20). God's immutable plan entails the providential outworking of sinful man (Acts 2:23; 2 Chron. 18:33 "the random arrow").

When we read the bulk of evidence, we can agree with the writer of Proverbs 16:4, 9.

⁴The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil. . . ⁹The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps."

VI. We see God's control in His redemptive activity.

- ²²Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-- ²³this Man, **delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.** ²⁴But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. (Acts 2:22-24)
- ²⁷For truly in this city **there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus**, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸**to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.** (Acts 4:27, 28)
- **The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!** It would have been good for that man if he had not been born. (Matt. 26:24)
- ²⁰On the contrary, who are you, **O man, who answers back to God?** The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? ²¹**Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?** ²²What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? ²³And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory (Rom. 9:20-23)
- ¹Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, **for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness,** ²**in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago** (Titus 1:1, 2)

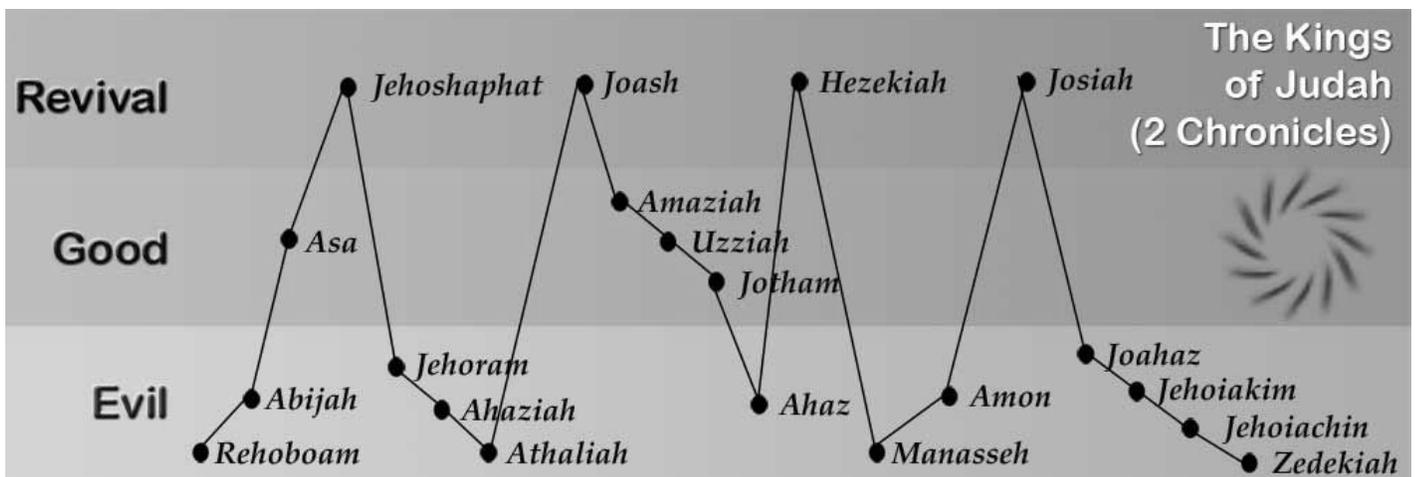
The purpose of God plays out in the saving of sinners. The salvation of sinners is according to His will. This brings us to our final consideration.

VII. We see God's control in the fulfillment of the Seed Promise (Matt. 1:1-17).

It is rather lengthy, but when we consider the genealogy of Jesus, we see a lineage of flawed and fallen humanity used by God for the fulfilling of His purpose to redeem His people from their sin.

- ¹ The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham: ² Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. ³ Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by **Tamar**, Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram. ⁴ Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon. ⁵ Salmon was the father of Boaz by **Rahab**, Boaz was the father of Obed by **Ruth**, and Obed the father of Jesse. ⁶ Jesse was the father of David the king. David was the father of Solomon by **Bathsheba** who had been the wife of Uriah. ⁷ Solomon was the father of **Rehoboam**, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa. ⁸ Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah. ⁹ Uzziah was the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah. ¹⁰ Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah. ¹¹ Josiah became the father of Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. ¹² After the deportation to Babylon: Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel. ¹³ Zerubbabel was the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor. ¹⁴ Azor was the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud. ¹⁵ Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob. ¹⁶ Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah. ¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations. (Matt. 1:1-17)

The genealogy of Jesus tells us two things. **First**, God is faithful to fulfill His promises. **Second**, He fulfills His promises through flawed people. Consider the following chart. It provides a quick snapshot of how flawed Israel's kings were.



<https://orcministries.wordpress.com/category/daily-bible-journal/1-2-chronicles/>

"**Human planning**, as all of Proverbs demonstrates, is part of what it means to live wisely. Fools plunge ahead without any forethought or consideration. Planning and strategizing are commendable. None of these proverbs criticize a careful assessment of future possibilities, nor

do they criticize the decision to pursue a particular direction. **What Proverbs emphasizes, however, is that ultimately it is what the Lord decides, not what human beings plan, which will come to pass.** It is wise to plan the size of your family, but the Lord either opens or closes the womb, or supplies the funds to adopt. It is wise to plan your course of study or what kind of work to pursue, but the Lord ultimately chooses the job for you. It is wise to be on the look-out for a godly spouse, but it's the Lord who may give you the strength to be single or bring into your life someone you wouldn't expect. What a comfort to know that our God reigns. He rules over all things, and he loves us. Even if we don't understand or like what is happening to us, he is with us. He will never leave or forsake us. And no one will ever foil his plan for us. Again, as God tells us in Proverbs 21:30-31, "No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the LORD. The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the LORD."⁵

One's Worldview matters. One's worldview answers the question, "How one understands the meaning of life. Who is in CONTROL?"

The poem INVICTUS was made popular by the same movie entitled INVICTUS concerning Nelson Mandela played by Morgan Freeman. But listen to the serpent's hiss.

INVICTUS

William Ernest Henley

(Humanist)

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.

Does it matter how you understand this idea of God's absolute right to rule as He deems best? Listen again to this poem as rewritten by Dorothea Day.

MY CAPTAIN
Dorothea Day
(Christian)

Out of the night that dazzles me,
 Bright as the sun from pole to pole,
 I thank the God I know to be
 For Christ the conqueror of my soul.

Since His the sway of circumstance,
 I would not wince nor cry aloud.
 Under that rule which men call chance
 My head with joy is humbly bowed.

Beyond this place of sin and tears
 That life with Him! And His the aid,
 Despite the menace of the years,
 Keeps, and shall keep me, unafraid.
 I have no fear, though strait the gate,
 He cleared from punishment the scroll.
 Christ is the Master of my fate,
 Christ is the Captain of my soul.

“The evil and suffering in this world are greater than any of us can comprehend. But evil and suffering are not ultimate. God is. Satan, the great lover of evil and suffering, is not sovereign. God is. “He does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, ‘What have you done?’” (Daniel 4:35) He declares “the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.’” (Isaiah 46:10) “Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?” (Lamentations 3:37-38; see Amos 3:6) “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.” (Proverbs 19:21; see 16:9) “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.” (Proverbs 16:33) Therefore, “if God is for us, who can be against us? . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:31-37).

William Cowper was an English poet who wrote many beloved hymns. His battles with doubt and depression are famous and often he wondered if he was even saved. “In 1763 he was offered a Clerkship of Journals in the House of Lords, but broke under the strain of the approaching examination; he experienced a period of depression and insanity. At this time he tried three times to commit suicide and was sent to Nathaniel Cotton's asylum at St. Albans for recovery. His poem beginning “Hatred and vengeance, my eternal portions” (sometimes referred to as “Sapphics”) was written in the aftermath of his suicide attempt. In 1773, Cowper experienced

an attack of insanity, imagining not only that he was eternally condemned to hell, but that God was commanding him to make a sacrifice of his own life.”⁶ This pattern followed him throughout his life. He found great comfort through the ministry of Pastor John Newton, author of AMAZING GRACE.

“The words were composed by William Cowper (1731-1800). Comprising six verses, they were written in 1773, just before the onset of a depressive illness, during which Cowper attempted suicide by drowning. It is thought to be the last hymn that he wrote, as he turned away from Christianity after his suicide bid, convinced that he was beyond redemption.”

God moves in a mysterious way
 His wonders to perform;
 He plants His footsteps in the sea
 And rides upon the storm.
 Deep in unfathomable mines
 Of never failing skill
 He treasures up His bright designs
 And works His sovereign will.
 Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
 The clouds ye so much dread
 Are big with mercy and shall break
 In blessings on your head.
 Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
 But trust Him for His grace;
 Behind a frowning providence
 He hides a smiling face.
 His purposes will ripen fast,
 Unfolding every hour;
 The bud may have a bitter taste,
 But sweet will be the flower.
 Blind unbelief is sure to err
 And scan His work in vain;
 God is His own interpreter,
 And He will make it plain.

“Cowper often struggled with depression and doubt. One night he decided to commit suicide by drowning himself. He called a cab and told the driver to take him to the Thames River. However, thick fog came down and prevented them from finding the river (another version of the story has the driver getting lost deliberately). After driving around lost for a while, the cabby finally stopped and let Cowper out. To Cowper’s surprise, he found himself on his own doorstep: God had sent the fog to keep him from killing himself. Even in our blackest moments, God watches over us.”⁷

“His life, as John Piper describes it in his biography of Cowper, seems to have been ‘one long accumulation of pain,’ especially mental pain. But this hymn writer trusted by faith—not

perfectly, but perseveringly – that in this mysterious and maddening providence, God was working wonders.”⁸

Friend, I do not know your situation, I only know mine and how you and I are part of the same experience. Keep struggling, pushing, living, and trusting that “behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.”

Know you are not alone in your struggle. You are a part of a innumerable host of kindred spirits who like you simply trust God in the midst of loss and pain knowing God is too wise to make a mistake and too loving to be unkind.

Shepherding the Sheep: (What is the NEXT STEP?)

1. Let us not allow such a wonderful truth to blind us to sin’s power. Our sin has consequences that are far reaching.
2. Nevertheless, will you see God’s sovereignty in all areas of your life?
3. Moreover, will you trust Him in all areas of your life?
4. Cast yourself today at the great throne of grace and cling to your merciful high priest.

¹ <http://www.credomag.com/2014/02/25/proverbs-gods-sovereignty-and-wisdom-thomas-schreiner/>

² <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/qna/godsovereign.html>

³ <http://www.gty.org/resources/articles/A189/Is-God-Responsible-for-Evil>

⁴ *The New York Public Library Desk Reference*, 1993, 266.

⁵ <http://www.credomag.com/2014/02/25/proverbs-gods-sovereignty-and-wisdom-thomas-schreiner/>

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Cowper

⁷ <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/g/m/gmovesmw.htm>

⁸ <http://www.challies.com/articles/hymn-stories-god-moves-in-a-mysterious-way>