

GOD'S NOT GUILTY

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Today I want to share one of the most important things God has ever done in my life. It seems people automatically believe everything that happens to them is from God, that He controls everything. The reason for this is that by definition God is supreme and all-powerful, and they just assume He controls everything that happens in our lives. Even unbelievers believe it. There are many Christians who promote this doctrine, and it has become ingrained in their lives. I believe what Scripture teaches is contrary to this, and it's very important that you learn this lesson. James 1:13-17 says, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

These verses make it very clear that God is the author of the good things. Jesus said in John 10:10, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." If it's good, it's God; if it's bad, it's the devil. That's very simple theology. The reason this is so critical is because James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." This says we have to submit, or yield control, to God and resist the devil. The word resist means to actively fight against.

When people believe everything that happens in life is totally from God—for example, sickness, failure in business, losing a job, rebellious children, or divorce—that puts them in the position of being passive. If they really believe God is the author of a situation and is using it to punish them or change them, they would be fighting against Him if they resist. Yet, James 4:7 says to resist the devil and he will flee from you. You have to submit yourself to God. This shows that certain things are of God and certain things are of the devil. There is a force of evil in this world, and not everything that happens in your life comes from God. If you don't understand that, you will end up submitting to the devil, and actually empowering Satan.

I want to bring out a passage in Romans because it is misused so often. I've actually been to funerals where people don't know anything about God, don't go to church, and know hardly any Scripture, but they know this one. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." This has been interpreted to say that whatever happens in your life, God does it and works it together for good in some way. I actually was at a funeral for a young boy and girl who had been mixing alcohol and drugs, got into a car, drove too fast on a slick road, slid around a corner, hit a telephone pole, and were both killed. The preacher quoted this Scripture, "We know all things work together for good," and said God must have a purpose in doing this. God did not kill those teenagers, and in a sense you can't even say the devil did it. They did it. I'm sure the devil enticed them to rebel against the standards their parents and others had taught them, but ultimately it was their choice. They're the ones who did the dope and alcohol; they're the ones that hit the telephone pole. That was a natural thing, and God wasn't the source of it.

What does it mean when it says “we know that all things work together for good”? First of all, it didn’t say we know all things come from God and work together for good. It says all things work together for good, but puts qualifications on it: “. . . to them that love God.” This Scripture doesn’t work for a person who doesn’t love God. That is so obvious that it should go without saying, but it is amazing how people apply it toward instances like these young people who were doing drugs and alcohol and were in total rebellion against God and His principles, and say God did it. This says it only works together for good to those who love God, and to those that are the called according to his purpose.

In 1 John 3:8 it says, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” God manifested himself to destroy Satan’s work. That’s His purpose, and it will only work together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose, that is, those who are walking in this calling, are resisting the devil, and are out to destroy his works. Those who are resisting the devil and living for God can say that regardless of what the devil does in their lives, God can turn it around and use it for good.

In the area of healing, if someone becomes ill with an incurable disease, that’s not God. He didn’t do that to them. But if they truly love Him and resist the devil and his works (which include sickness), and if they fight against it and release their faith, then you can say that even this sickness is going to work together for good. God didn’t cause it, God didn’t ordain it, but it can work together for good when you love God and are the called according to His purpose.

It is imperative that you understand this, because Scripture says Satan loves to come as an angel of light. He loves to disguise himself. He doesn’t come at you with a pitchfork, horns, and a red union suit. Instead, he’ll disguise himself and try to make you think he’s God. If you really believe God is the author of the problems in your life, you’ll submit to them because you don’t want to resist God. If you really believe God is the author of the sickness in your life, it is inconsistent to take medicine, to go to a doctor and have them operate, or to seek some type of treatment. If you really believe God put sickness on you to teach you something, the logical thing to do is submit to it, let it run its course, and learn the full lesson you are supposed to learn.

Even in the natural people say, “No, I wouldn’t do that. You’re supposed fight against it, not just lie down and take it,” and I agree. I’m saying the same thing in the spiritual realm, as well as the physical realm, that we need to start discerning that God does not control everything in our lives. There is an enemy that comes to kill, steal, and destroy, but Jesus has come to give us life. We have to choose life and willfully recognize that God’s not guilty of everything that comes into our lives.

If God was a physical human being who did the things He is accused of, such as putting cancer, deformities, depression, sorrow, and grief on people, I guarantee there isn’t a government on earth that wouldn’t arrest, imprison, or try to stop Him. Yet we think God, who is much more merciful than any person we’ve met or imagined in our whole life, is going around striking people and doing this. There are some things that are demonic attacks and some that are natural, and not all disasters are God ordained. The insurance companies write in policies, “acts of God, such as earthquakes and pestilence.” No, God is not the author of all these things.

Someone might say, “But wait a minute, isn’t God sovereign?” The word sovereign literally means independent. For instance, the United States became a sovereign nation—became independent of Great Britain—and we set our own rules and have our own government. That doesn’t mean we’re a lawless people. Our laws govern our lifestyle, so we are not lawless—we are sovereign, we are independent. In that sense God is certainly independent. Nobody tells Him what to do. People sometimes misuse the word sovereign to mean that you never know what God is going to do, that He can’t be put in a box or contained. Certainly He’s not going to fit in our box—our little doctrines and theologies. God has bound himself by his Word. Psalm 138:2 says, “for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.” He will never violate His word. Heaven and earth are established on the integrity of God’s word, and if He ever violated His Word, they would self-destruct. God can be predicted to do exactly what His word says, so in that sense you can’t say it’s a sovereign act of God, that He just moved independent of everybody else.

God has established laws, and He doesn’t control everything in our lives. He has given us a wide range of choices. Most of the time it is us making the wrong choices, or somebody else who has a free will and causes us grief through their sovereignty. Other times it’s the devil who comes against us, but I want you to know today that God’s not guilty. He’s not the author of bad things in your life. Going back to the first verse we used in James 1:17, it says, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.”

Don’t submit yourself to something God doesn’t want in your life, thinking, “Well, God must control everything, because He’s God.” No, God created this earth and set down laws, and He gives you and me the choices to make. He said in Deuteronomy 30:19, “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.” God gave you the choice, and I pray that today you will choose life.

GOD'S NOT GUILTY (Outline)

James 1:13-17, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: ¹⁴But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. ¹⁵Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. ¹⁶Do not err, my beloved brethren. ¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

God is the author of good things. If it's good it's God and if it's bad it's the devil. John 10:10, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

If you believe everything that happens in your life is totally of God and that God for some reason is using it to try and punish or change you, it puts you in a passive position. If God is the author of it then you can't resist it or you'd be fighting against God.

There is a force of evil alive in this world and not everything that happens in your life comes from God. If you don't understand this you'll end up submitting yourself unto the devil and actually empowering him. James 4:7, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

"All things work together for good" according to Romans 8:28. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" only for those who love God and who are the called according to His purpose which, according to 1 John 3:8, is to resist and destroy the works of the devil, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

Satan loves to disguise himself and try to make you think that it's God who is the author of the problems in your life. Then you'll submit to them because you don't want to resist God.

God doesn't control everything in your life. You have to willfully recognize that God's not guilty of all that comes into your life. Some things are demonic attacks and some are natural.

"Sovereign" literally means independent—where you set your own rules and government. It does not mean you are lawless. In this sense, God is sovereign. God is independent; no one tells Him what to do.

Many people misuse the word “sovereign” to mean that you never know what God is going to do. He can’t be put in a box. It is true that He’s not going to fit into our box with our little doctrines and theology, but God has bound Himself by His Word. God will never violate His Word. God can be predicted to do exactly what His Word says. Psalm 138:2: “I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.”

God created the earth and then He set down laws and He gives you and me the choices to make. “Therefore choose life.” Deuteronomy 30:19, “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:”

GOD'S NOT GUILTY (Teacher's Guide)

1.
 - A. According to James 1:13, does God cause men to be tempted by evil?
No.
 - B. According to James 1:17, where do good gifts come from?
The Father of lights.
2.
 - A. According to John 10:10, who is the thief?
The devil.
 - B. What are his purposes?
To steal, kill and destroy.
 - C. What is the reason Jesus came?
To give us life more abundantly.
3. God is a good God and the devil is a bad devil. According to James 4:7, what is the result when we resist the devil?

He will flee from us. This verse shows that some things are from God and some things are from the devil—we need to know the difference.
4.
 - A. Does Romans 8:28 say that all things are from God?
No.
 - B. According to this verse, to what kind of people do all things work together for good?
To them that love God.

5. A. What was the purpose that the Son of God was manifested? See 1 John 3:8.

To destroy the works of the devil.

B. Is sickness from God?

No. See Acts 10:38 and Matthew 8:16-17.

6. We need to willingly choose to believe the truth about God—that He is a good God. What does Romans 8:31 say?

If God is for us, who can be against us?

GOD'S NOT GUILTY (Detailed Teacher's Guide)

Note: The following information may be read out loud (a numbered section at a time) with person(s) being disciplined. After each numbered section is read, pause and ask the question(s) that correspond to the paragraph(s), and then discuss them.

¹The word “sovereign” is not used in the King James Version of the Bible. It is used 303 times in the Old Testament of the New International Version, but it is always used in association with the word “LORD” and is the equivalent of the King James Version’s LORD God. Not a single one of those times is the word “sovereign” used in the manner that it has come to be used by religion in our day and time. Religion has invented a new meaning for the word “sovereign” which basically says that God controls everything. However, there is nothing in the actual definition stating this. The dictionary defines “sovereign” as “1. Paramount; supreme. 2. Having supreme reign or power. 3. Independent: a sovereign state. 4. Excellent.” None of these definitions means God controls everything.

²It is supposed that, since God is paramount or supreme, nothing can happen without His approval. But that is not what the scriptures teach. In 2 Peter 3:9, Peter said, “The Lord is . . . not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” This clearly states that it is not the Lord’s will for anyone to perish, however, some will perish. In fact, Jesus said, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide [is] the gate, and broad [is] the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat” (Matthew 7:13). Relatively few people are saved compared to the number that are lost.

³This is not because the Lord wills anyone to perish. He paid for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2, and 1 Timothy 4:10). People choose to perish by not choosing Jesus as their Saviour. God has a perfect plan for every person’s life (Jeremiah 29:11), but He doesn’t make us walk that path. We are free moral agents with the ability to choose. He tells us what the right choices are (Deuteronomy 30:19), BUT he doesn’t make those choices for us.

¹How does the dictionary define the word “sovereign”?

²(a) What is God’s will according to 2 Peter 3:9? That none should perish.
(b) Does his will automatically come to pass?

³(a) What does Revelation 22:17 say about partakers of God’s gift? Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.
(b) What does John 3:16 say?

⁴ God created us to be dependent upon Him, and our independence is at the root of all our problems. As if it wasn't bad enough for a man to try and run his affairs independent of God and His standards, it has been made even worse by the religious teaching that all our problems are actually "blessings" from God. That is a faith killer. It makes people totally passive.

⁵ James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Some things are from God and some things are from the devil. We must submit to the things that are from God and resist the things that are from the devil. The word "resist" means "to actively fight against." Saying, "Whatever will be will be," is not actively fighting against the devil. If people really believed God was the one who put sickness on them because He was trying to work some good in their lives, then they would not go to the doctor or take any medicine. That would be resisting God's plans. They should let the sickness run its course and thereby get the full benefit of God's correction. Of course, no one advocates that. That is absurd. It is even more absurd to believe that God is the one who makes people sick. Acts 10:38 says that Jesus healed all those who were oppressed OF THE DEVIL. It was not God who oppressed them with sickness. It was the devil. It's the same today.

⁴ What does John 15:5 show us about being independent from God?

⁵ (a) According to 1 John 3:8, what was the purpose of Jesus Christ coming?

To destroy the works of the devil.

(b) What was Jesus' purpose according to Acts 10:38? To do good and heal all who were oppressed of the devil.

GOD'S NOT GUILTY
(Discipleship Questions)

Read James 1:12-18

1. What are you if you endure temptation?
2. What will you receive when you have been approved?
3. To whom has the Lord promised this Crown of Life?
4. Does God cause men to be tempted by evil?
5. Does God tempt anyone?
6. How are we each tempted ?
7. What happens once desire has conceived itself in you?
8. What happens when sin is full-grown?
9. How many good and perfects gifts are from God?
10. Is there any variation or shadow of turning with God?
11. Of Whose will were we brought forth by the word of truth?
12. Why did He do that?

Read James 1:19-20

13. What qualities are needed for those who persevere through trials?
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____

14. Does the wrath of man produce the righteousness of God?

Read John 10:10

15. Who is the thief?
16. What are his purposes? _____, _____, and _____
17. Why did Jesus come?

Read James 4:7-8, 10

18. What two things must you do so that the devil will flee from you?
A. _____
B. _____
19. What happens when you draw near to God?
20. What are you to do with your hands and your heart?
21. Verse 10 “ _____ yourselves in the sight of the _____, and He will _____ you up.”

Read Romans 8:28

22. Are all things from God?
23. For whom do all things work together for good?

Read 1 John 3:8

24. What was the purpose that the Son of God was manifested?

Read Acts 10:38, Matthew 8:16

25. In Acts, how many did Jesus heal?
26. Who were they oppressed by?
27. Have you ever been oppressed by the devil?
28. Since Jesus healed them, do you believe that He can also heal you?
29. In Matthew, how many did Jesus heal that were sick?
30. If sickness isn't from God, who is it from?
31. Do you understand that if you have sickness in your body you can rebuke it because it isn't from God, and in fact He wants to heal you?

Read Romans 8:31

32. Write out this verse:

Read John 15:5

33. Who is the vine?
34. Who is the branch?
35. If we abide in Him, will we bear much or little fruit?
36. Can we do anything without Jesus?

Read 2 Peter 3:9

37. Is the Lord slack concerning His promises?
38. What is His attitude towards us?
39. Is He willing that any should perish?
40. What is His desire that we must all do?

This, brothers and sister's is the will of God!

Read Romans 12:9-21

41. List all the attributes we must do or not do, to behave like a Christian, or "little Christ."

42. With God exhorting us to do these things, can you see that they are for our own good, and for our own benefit?

GOD'S NOT GUILTY
(Discipleship Answer Key)

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|--|---|
| 1. Blessed | 20. Cleanse your hands, and purify your heart |
| 2. A crown of life | 21. Humble – Lord – Lift |
| 3. To those who love Him | 22. No |
| 4. No | 23. For those who love God |
| 5. No | 24. To destroy the works of the devil |
| 6. When we are drawn away by our own desires | 25. All |
| 7. It gives birth to sin | 26. The devil |
| 8. It brings forth death | 27. Yes |
| 9. All | 28. Yes |
| 10. No | 29. All |
| 11. Of His own (God's) | 30. The devil |
| 12. To be the first fruits of His creatures | 31. Yes |
| 13. a. Swift to hear
b. Slow to speak
c. Slow to wrath | 32. If God is for us, who can be against us |
| 14. No | 33. Jesus |
| 15. Satan | 34. Us |
| 16. Kill, steal, destroy | 35. Much |
| 17. To give life abundantly | 36. No |
| 18. A. Submit to God
B. Resist the devil | 37. No |
| 19. He will draw near to you | 38. Longsuffering |
| | 39. No |
| | 40. Come to repentance |

GOD'S NOT GUILTY (Additional Material)

The "Goodness of God" is described as:

A perfection of God's character which He exercises towards His creatures according to their various circumstances and relations (Psalms 145:8-9, 103:8, and 1 John 4:8). Viewed generally, it is benevolence; as exercised with respect to the miseries of His creatures it is mercy, pity, compassion, and in the case of impenitent sinners, long-suffering patience; as exercised in communicating favour on the unworthy, it is grace. Goodness and justice are the several aspects of His one unchangeable, infinitely wise, and moral perfection. God is not sometimes merciful and sometimes just, but he is eternally infinitely just and merciful. God is infinitely and unchangeably good (Zephaniah 3:17) and His goodness is incomprehensible by the finite mind (Romans 11:35-36). God's goodness appears in two things, giving and forgiving.

(Adapted from Easton's Bible Dictionary, 1897)