

Why Does Evil Dominate the World?

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

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I told you that I was going to speak on the problem of evil. Why did God allow evil in the world? You could frame the question a number of ways. If the Creator God is so good, why is there so much evil in the world? In fact, the reality of evil in the world is one of the favorite justifications of those who reject the God of the Bible. They're eager to ask those questions in a myriad of different ways...how can God be holy and allow His creation to be dominated by unholiness? How can God be perfectly righteous and ordain the presence of unrighteousness? There are a number of ways that this particular idea is effectively communicated. One is a syllogism, a series of logical steps such as the biblical God is loving...the biblical God is all-knowing, the biblical God is all powerful, yet massive evil exists in the world therefore the biblical God does not exist. That is to say that whoever allows this evil cannot be loving, or cannot be holy, or cannot be all powerful or all knowing and still allow evil.

In the minds of many, this backs Christians up into an impossible corner. There are many who see this as putting us, I guess you could say, at fourth and forty on our own ten-yard line. And our only option is to punt. And there are many Christians who would agree with that and they would grab Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong to the Lord," and punt that into the opposition's territory as far as they can. Is that the best we can do when pressed against our own theological end zone, is to punt Deuteronomy 29:29? Isn't there anything better than that in the divine play book? Isn't there some kind of long pass we can complete, something that will not only allow us to escape from defeat, but guarantee victory?

I believe there is. I believe that Scripture gives us an answer and without hesitation we can know that answer, we can understand that answer, and we can find eminent satisfaction in that answer. It is not enough to simply say the secret things belong to the Lord, which is to say we don't know, God doesn't tell us. God did not tell Adam and Eve why He let that snake in the Garden. And He didn't tell them why He gave that snake the ability to talk. Nor did God tell Job why He unleashed calamity, disease, disaster and death and Satan into his life. And when Job tried to get an answer out of God, He never did tell him why. So isn't that the best approach, to just say we really don't know, Scripture doesn't tell us? That would be the best answer if Scripture didn't tell us. If that was honestly the case and we said that we have no scriptural answer, that's fine. But we do have a scriptural answer, that's fine. But we do have a scriptural answer.

And this opens up to our thinking a whole category of theological truth that goes under the name of theodicy...theodicy...t-h-e-o-d-i-c-y, theodicy. It comes from two Greek words, *theos* meaning God,

and *dik* which is the root of the words that mean righteousness or righteous, or just, or justice. A theodicy is an explanation of how God can be just, or how God can be righteous. It is a defense of God's righteousness in the face of the presence of pervasive sin. And so I want to give you what I believe is a biblical theodicy, a biblical defense of why God who is holy, who is loving, who is all-knowing, who is all-powerful has allowed evil to dominate His creation?

So I'm going to put together my own little series of logical points. Number one, evil exists...evil exists. This is without serious argument. It is incontrovertible unless you are a Christian science advocate. It was Mary Baker Eddy Patterson Glover Frye...she had a problem with men...who basically developed what is called Christian Science. The teaching of Christian Science is this, "All evil is an illusion. All sickness is an illusion. And even death is an illusion." Christian Science is actually like Grape Nuts. If you've ever had Grape Nuts, I don't know why they named them that, they're not grapes and they're not nuts. And Christian Science is neither Christian nor scientific. But it sounds impressive.

The answer is not to play some ridiculous metaphysical game to say something doesn't exist that clearly does exist. Evil exists. It exists apparently, manifestly, massively, dominantly in our world. And there are a number of categories in which evil exists. Let me give you a few.

There is natural evil. That is impersonal, external, physical, temporal evil in the form of diseases, disasters, catastrophes, the kinds of things that come from the physical world, the cursed creation from tiny bacteria to tidal waves, from viruses to volcanoes. The whole natural world is blighted by bad things, things that make you sick, things that injure you, things that kill you. And humans since the Fall have lived at the mercy of the physical corruption. All you have to do is go back to the book of Genesis and not long after the Fall comes the Flood which basically is a massive natural disaster ordained and authored and executed by God Himself which drowns the entire human race with the exception of eight people. There is natural evil beyond the Flood even to this very day, rarely does a day go by when we don't hear of someone somewhere or some group somewhere or some massive amount of people somewhere dying in some kind of natural disaster, or some plague, or some illness sweeping through the lives of people. Natural evil.

Secondly, there's moral evil. Moral evil is personal as opposed to natural evil which is impersonal. It is internal, it is spiritual. It is wickedness, sin, transgression, iniquity, whatever term you want to use for it. It is a bent, it is a disposition. It is an attitude, it is a course of thinking, speaking and conduct which dominates the human race so that Scripture says, "No one is good, not even one." Scripture says, "All the thoughts of the human heart are only evil continually." Scripture says that it is out of the heart that lust conceives and produces sin and from that sin comes death. The Bible tells us that society is dominated by corruption. And it is not a disaster that kills us. A disaster may kill us, but if we miss all the disasters and all the diseases, we will still die because the waves of sin is death. The corruption comes to every human being. It impacts every life, every relationship. All of humanity is made up of sinners, no one is exempt. And all the immoral sinners collide with each other in malfunctioning

families and friendships and rivalries and associations and nations. The collision of wicked, selfish, immoral hearts fills the world with one disaster after another.

Then thirdly there is supernatural evil...supernatural evil. This is the evil that is basically perpetrated by demons, fallen angels, the associates of Satan, the number of the angels that fell from heaven with Satan as indicated in Revelation 12 to be a third of the angels, leaving two thirds remaining as holy angels, one third are fallen. Satan is one of those and the whole world, 1 John 5:20 says, lies in the lap of the evil one. These vile beings are as old as creation. They are unmitigatedly wicked. There is nothing in them that is good at all. There are ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of them. They ply their wickedness on an angelic level and also on a human level. It will get worse in the future when God casts them all into the earth in the future time of Tribulation. Satan who leads them is for this time given temporary authority over the world system. He has a temporary and delegated sovereignty in this world so that even as believers we are not wrestling against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness and authorities in high places that are wicked. There is a massive, spiritual struggle going on in this world system effected by demons. They have the power to seduce and deceive humanity against God and against the gospel and against Scripture and to draw them deeper and deeper and deeper into immorality and iniquity.

And then there is another category of evil, eternal evil....eternal evil. In a word, hell...hell. People who go to hell, the majority of the human race, will be forever evil...forever evil. The worm will not die. The fire will not be quenched. The remorse will not end. The judgment will not cease. The punishment will not be mitigated. Recently one of the popular pastors in America who has led a great church growth movement said, "Hell, as far as he's concerned, is like missing the last three pointer at the buzzer to lose the game. And so you spend forever feeling bad about missing that shot." That is not a biblical view of hell. It is punishment. It is unrestrained and unmitigated evil and a fully informed accusing conscience.

Yes there is evil. And there is not marginal evil and there is not minimal evil, there is pervasive, dominant evil. And I guess you could say that evil has a kind of secondary dominance in the whole of creation. It effects everything. It effects the natural creation, the supernatural creation and the human and personal creation.

So we start with the obvious. We admit it. We don't deny it. Anybody who denies it is an absolute fool. Evil is massive, evil is out of control, evil is ingrained, it is systemic, it is everywhere all the time manifest in every one.

Now let's move to the next factor in our reasoning. First, evil exists. Second, God exists. God exists. And only one God exists and He is the God revealed in Scripture, the one, true and only living God, the God of the Bible. And He is exactly the God that Scripture says He is, since the Bible is His self revelation. He is as the Revelation of Scripture describes Him. He is all-powerful, He is all-knowing,

He is loving, and He is absolutely holy. Yes He is holy. Yes He is loving. Yes He is omnipotent, that is all-powerful and omniscient, all-knowing. He controls absolutely everything. The Bible tells us that God exists and that nothing exists that He does not ordain. Nothing occurs that He does not ordain. Everything is designed by, ordained by, and controlled by God. That is the biblical testimony.

Let me remind you of it. First Chronicles 29:11 and 12. "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty. For all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine. Thine is the Kingdom, O Lord. Thou art exalted as head above all. Thou reignest over all and in Thine hand is power and might and in Thine hand is to make great to give strength unto all." Psalm 115:3, "Our God is in the heavens, He has done whatever He pleased." Daniel 4:35, "He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, 'What are you doing?'" Scripture repeatedly affirms the sovereignty of God over everything. God's sovereignty is absolute, irresistible and infinite.

When we say that God is sovereign, we simply mean He has a right to be in charge of absolutely everything because He, in fact, is in charge of absolutely everything. That is why 1 Timothy 6:15 says, "He is the only potentate, or ruler. He is the only sovereign, the only monarch." In Revelation 4:11 we read, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for You have created all things and for Your pleasure they are and were created." "All things" is the operative phrase. Everything fits into God's pleasure. Everything is to please God. Proverbs 16:4, "The Lord has made all things for Himself, even the wicked for the day of evil." Even the wicked for the day of evil.

Listen to Deuteronomy 32:39. "See now that I, I am He...says God...and there is no God beside Me, it is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded. It is I who heal and there is no one who can deliver from My hand." Or Exodus 4:11, "The Lord said to Moses, 'Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I the Lord?'" Or Psalm 105:16, "He called for a famine upon the land." Or 2 Kings 17:25, "They did not fear the Lord, therefore the Lord sent lions which killed some of them." Scripture is very clear that God is behind what we would classify as good things and what we would classify as evil things, or bad things. God created out of His own free choice, uninfluenced, God created everything that is, ordained everything that is. And in 2 Samuel 10:12 it says, "The Lord does what seems to Him good." The Lord does what seems to Him good.

Listen to Psalm 33:9 to 11. "He spoke and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast. The Lord brings the counsel of the heathen to naught, He makes the devices of the people of no effect. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations." Or Psalm 103:19, "The Lord has prepared His throne in the heavens. His Kingdom rules over all." Or Isaiah 14:27, "The Lord of host has purposed and who shall disannul it? His hand is stretched out, who shall turn it back?" Or Isaiah 46:9 and 10, "Remember the former things of old, for I am God, there is none else, I am God. There is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times to things that are not yet done, saying My counsel shall stand, I will do all My pleasure." First Samuel 2:6 to 8,

"The Lord kills and makes alive. He brings down to the grave, and brings up. He makes poor and makes rich. He brings low and lifts up." Or Amos 3:6, "If there is a calamity in the city, will not the Lord have done it?"

God controls absolutely everything. There is no evil outside His plan. There is no evil outside His purpose. He knows everything that can be known, that is knowable. He has comprehensive power to do everything that can be done that is possible. That is what the Bible says about God. And in that perfect knowledge, and in that perfect power, and with perfect holiness, and expressing His perfect love, God ordains everything.

That leads us to a third conclusion. Evil exists, God exists, and this is the only God who exists, thirdly, God wills evil to exist. God wills evil to exist. It is inescapable.

Turn in your Bible for a moment to Isaiah 45, and we're going to have to move rapidly tonight to work our way through this. But in Isaiah 45 it is important to draw your attention to...well let's start in verse 5, Isaiah 45:5. "I am the Lord, there is no other. Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you though you have not known Me that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me. I am the Lord, there is no other." That's fairly well established in those two verses. "I am the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity. I am the Lord who does all these." Go down to verse 9. "Woe to the one who quarrels with His maker. An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth? Will the clay say to the potter, 'What are you doing?' Or the things you are making say, 'He has no hands.' Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?' Or to a woman, 'To what are you giving birth?' No pot can tell the potter what to do. No born child can tell his parents to give birth or not give birth. Nor can you question what God does." And God clearly has ordained evil.

Now at this point panic strikes the heart of Arminians...not Armenians, but Arminians. Big difference. Panic strikes the heart of Arminians. They become short of breath here. They start to have heart palpitations, sweaty palms, their eyes roll back, they launch into rapid heart rate. What? God has ordained evil? They don't deny God's power, they would affirm it. They don't deny His knowledge, they would affirm it. They don't even deny that God should be glorified in saving sinners. But the panic attack hits them because they cannot let God be held responsible for evil. If you want to drive Arminian theology, or the opposite of Reformed theology, or the opposite of Calvinism, that kind of theology that denies that God is sovereign and that regeneration is fully a work of God, that kind of theology that says man is sovereign, he's responsible for his own life, he makes his own choices and he becomes a sinner on his own, and he believes on his own and he exercises faith on his own, and he is saved by pulling himself up by his own bootstrap, that is to accommodate the idea that is behind that whole system, and that is we can't make God responsible for evil.

I really think that Arminian theology, for the most part, is a device to get God off the hook. And how do they do it? Well the bottom line is, God is not responsible for evil, you are. That really doesn't help because why did God create creatures who would be responsible for evil knowing what they would do? Just backs the responsibility back to Him. The popular way nowadays that people in that category who don't want God to be responsible for evil in the world is to say that either He didn't have the knowledge that evil was coming, or He doesn't have the power to deal with it. One of the two. Either He in His creation made everything perfect and didn't know about evil's future existence, and so it caught Him off guard. Or He knew but He didn't have the power to stop it. Or He purposely limited His power to stop it for some higher value. Now those are the kinds of things you have to deal with in this argument. Either God didn't know, didn't have the power, chose not to use the power because He had something even more important than evil, something of higher value in view. These kinds of criticisms are supposed to get God off the hook. But what they do is reinvent God. You reinvent a God who is not all-knowing. You reinvent a God who is not all-powerful. That's the only way out and that's why that kind of theology exists.

But let's follow along with let's call the group one...the fact that God hasn't got the knowledge, that He doesn't have the information when He creates so He doesn't know really what's going to happen. This would fit into the system called process theology. Process theology is a group that have reinvented God as a deity in progress. He is not the God today that He was yesterday because He knows more today because more has happened today. And He's finding it out as it happens. This is also what Openness Theism believes, that God is in process, He is not now what He used to be, He's better now, the process has really helped Him, but He is not what He will be a week from now because there will be more things that He'll discovered as history unfolds. And with the unfolding of history came the unfolding of evil, and so God is off the hook because God just didn't know. God couldn't know because He couldn't know what hasn't happened, that is the Openness approach. God can't be responsible for evil. Evil exists and therefore God couldn't have known that it was coming until it showed up. In fact, they'll go so far as to say He hoped the best for Adam. Humm...so much for positive thinking even on God's part. He's not omniscient so when evil showed up, He had to come up with Plan B which was the cross.

Well you get the picture. These are people who lack a true and biblical view of God. They also lack a God-focused, God-exalting, God-dominated view of the universe. They look at things from a man-centered perch and they need to be certain that God doesn't violate any of their rules. It can't be true that God has both a full knowledge of evil and the full power to prevent it and still let it come into existence because that means He ordained it. If He had the full knowledge of it and the full power to deal with it and it exists, then He ordained it. That's more than an Arminian can swallow. Either He didn't have the knowledge, or He didn't have the power, so you have to reinvent God.

There are people actually who aren't even that sophisticated, they're just short answer folks. We hinted at them earlier. You say, "Where did evil come from?" And they'll say, "Oh it came from Adam

and Eve." Really? How did it get introduced to Adam and Eve? "Well, oh yeah, that's right, it came from the snake." Well how did the...how did the snake get to a place where he could be embodied by Satan and how did Satan get to be Satan in which he was tempting people to do evil? "Oh well, he came from...oh, he came from heaven, didn't he?"

So where did evil originate? Evil originated where? In heaven? Yes, evil originated in heaven in an angelic rebellion right under the nose of God. You think that was a shock? Then you don't have a God who is absolutely omniscient. You think God couldn't stop it once it got going? Couldn't put an end to it right on the spot? Then you have a God who is not all powerful. No matter how you deal with it, if you sustain the biblical doctrine of God, God becomes ultimately responsible for the existence of evil.

You remember Rabbi Kushner(?) in the book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*? A lot of things wrong with that book. The thing that's wrong with the title is there are no good people. But let's grant him his title, *When Bad Things Happen To Good People*. What he does is reinvent God. He reinvents God. God doesn't have the knowledge and God doesn't have the power. So let's not hold Him responsible for what He doesn't know and can't deal with.

One writer, Ledonitz(?), looked at this problem and said, "God created the best of all worlds that He could make, He couldn't do any better." Really. Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism other sort of ancient philosophies said, "God had to deal with two co-eternal and independent realities good and evil...co-eternal, independent, that is always existing.

Well none of these answers is adequate. All these answers come from people who lack a fixed God-centered view of reality and they have to abandon a biblical view of God. But many of the people who offer these kind of answers declare their faith in the Bible and the God of the Bible, but they expect the God of the Bible to be dragged into a human court, a court of human reason to be judged by a moral law lower than himself. Wow. Somehow God is a higher being, but we have a higher law. We're going to acknowledge that God is the eternal God, but we're going to hold Him accountable to our understanding of justice.

Now when you boil all this down, there are a number of categories in which theodicies can be created. Let me just give them to you. This is a little seminary class, folks, hang on. The first category is metaphysical...metaphysical. That is to say evil is inevitable. It is a corollary of good. It is necessary. It's Yin Yang. It's a necessary opposite of one thing that exists by the very metaphysics of its existence, the opposite can exist as well. It is not that God created evil. It is not that God ordained evil. It is that evil is because good is. It is simply a negation. It is simply a privation. It is the absence of the opposite of. If you have an infinity, you have a finitude. If you have a good, you have an evil.

There's some truth in that to some limited degree metaphysically. There is also the more theological approach to that metaphysical idea and it is this, that because God created humanity good, the

potential for evil existed within that creation and man exercising his will chose the evil. So it didn't really come from God, it came from man. It didn't really come from God, it came from Lucifer who made the same choice in heaven. That was strongly the argument of Augustine and Aquinas in ancient times. And there is truth in that. There is the holiness of God and there is the sinfulness of the creature. But it leaves too much to metaphysical inevitability and it asks the question...if because good exists and evil then must exist, is that perpetually true? And when we get to heaven and the new heaven and the new earth because that is eternal and perfect good, will we always be staring down the barrel of potential evil again because it's a metaphysical necessity?

There's a second kind of theodicy. Let's drop the metaphysical approach to theodicy and let's introduce the autonomous theodicy, or theodicies. A number of people come into this category to develop their theodicies. This is the category that suggests the cause of evil is the abuse of free will. And again we're back to our Arminian friends. This is the abuse of free will. And this basically says the highest good to God is free will. Free will trumps everything on God's scale, even evil. God could have prevented evil, but He wanted free will to exist and when He allowed free will to exist, therefore evil exists because those free and autonomous creatures choose evil. And because free will was more important as a reality than eliminating evil, evil exists. Evil exists because God exalts free will. Free will trumps evil on God's value scale so that God had to allow for the possibility of evil in order to preserve the more highly prized autonomy that protects Him from injustice. Again, the bottom line is you can't make God responsible for anything, so the greatest good in the creation is free will...angels have a free will, at least initially, humans have a free will, they make choices, that's the greater good, that's the higher value to God even if it means sin and evil exist. Humans must have the self-determined freedom to act. If God acts as a primary cause for people's choices, they would not be free. If God decided they would be coerced and compelled and that would violate their will and we should have a completely free will. That's the highest good. This gets God off the hook again, at least it appears to on a shallow level. But again, it requires reinventing a God...listen to this...who values your will over His own. This is inventing a God who values everybody's over His own and that's not the God I just read about in the Scripture.

And anyway, if God knew people would choose sin and hell, why did He go ahead and create them anyway? And why did He design free will? He could decide what the noblest of all virtues was, why make it free will if it's going to end up like this and you're going to have to go to Plan B just to recover from the exercise of these myriad free wills?

So you can see that an autonomous theodicy as a category has to deny the direct involvement of God as He is revealed to be in the Old Testament. Does He not know what people are going to do? Or is giving them the freedom to do it more important than the presence of evil? If God has both knowledge and power, then He had to give men the free will to start with and He knew exactly what they would do with it and He went ahead and gave it to them and therefore in the end He had to ordain evil. It doesn't solve any problem except to diminish the glory of God.

To design a God with limited knowledge, to design a God with limited power, to design a God who is more concerned about the will of every single human being than His own will is to design a God that is not the biblical God. If God is not in total control of evil, if He has not ordained it, listen, and if He does not have it under complete control at every millisecond of history, then this universe is out of control at the most crucial point. If God is not in control of this completely, then how and when will He get the knowledge and the power to get it under control? And I would ask you this. Would you rather have a God trying to get control of evil, or a God completely in control of it? Take your choice. But the God of the Bible is complete control of evil for His own purposes. It is really heresy to say that the world is full of evil apart from a predetermined plan and purpose by God that is far above the willy-nilly choices of people.

So what do we know up to now? Evil exists. God exists. God wills evil to exist. He did not create it. He could not create it. But He did not prevent it. He ordained it. He willed it. Here it comes, listen carefully...because He had a purpose for it....He had a purpose for it...a purpose. This is critical. He had a purpose for evil.

What is that purpose that God had for evil? Before I answer that question and that's the fourth in our little outline, let me read the Westminster Confession from the seventeenth hundreds, some great theologians and biblical scholars put this together, listen carefully. "God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass. Yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second-hand causes taken away, sinfulness proceeds not only from the creature...proceeds only from the creature and not from God who being most holy and righteous neither can be the author and approver of sin. But then...says the Westminster Confession...all that God decrees and all that God providentially brings to pass is all to the praise of His glory."

And they got it right. The reason for God ordaining evil is for the praise of His glory. Let me ask you a simple question to help you answer the question...the bigger question. Is God more glorious because of sin existing or less glorious? Pretty easy question to answer, isn't it? That really is the ultimate question. Throughout all the eons of eternity will God receive more glory from His creatures because sin existed, or less? And, friends, that's really all that matters is the eternal glory of God.

So it's fourth down and we're on the ten-yard line and I'm pulling out the winning play and we're going for six for the victory. Turn to Romans 3 and I want you to track with me a little bit. Can't take time to develop all of this, but I'm going to give you a good start. Wish I could build context, we don't have time. But let's look at chapter 3 verse 5. Opening statement, "But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say?"

Grab that phrase. Our right...unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God. And Paul uses the first of a series of verbs, this one happens to be *sunistemi* translated "demonstrates" in the New American Standard. It is a verb that means to disclose, to reveal, to put on display, to show. Our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God. Another way to say that would be, "Would you really understand the righteousness of God if you didn't understand unrighteousness?" Isn't there something to be gained by the contrast? Paul has been showing that God is faithful to His promises to Israel and their sin and unbelief cannot alter God's covenant, cannot alter God's faithfulness. God is righteous. God will do what He said for Israel and even Israel's unrighteousness cannot cancel God's righteousness, but rather gives Him opportunity to demonstrate that righteousness. Even Israel's departure from the truth does no damage to God's truth or God's glory, Paul shows. So in a particular case with regard to Israel, their unrighteousness only made God's righteousness all the more glorious. And in general, unrighteousness only makes righteousness the more wondrous. And so God by allowing unrighteousness is demonstrating righteousness.

Turn to chapter 5 verse 8. Here comes that word "demonstrates" again. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Would we understand righteousness without unrighteousness? Would we understand love without sin? Would we understand the love of God in Christ to us if we did not understand how sinful and undeserving and wretched we are? Would we understand the significance of the sufferings of Jesus Christ on the cross for us? Not at all. The cross is the greatest display of the love of God, it is a massive display of the love of God against the backdrop of sin. Our being sinners, our being enemies allows God to put His love on open display.

So, Paul says God demonstrates His righteousness in a context of unrighteousness. God demonstrates His love in a context of hate among enemies. Turn to chapter 9...chapter 9. Here again translators of the NAS have helped us again by using the word "demonstrate," this time the verb is *endeiknumi*, it's a synonym for *sunistemi*, it means the same thing. What if...verse 22, Romans 9, "What if God although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction and He did so in order that He might make known...there's a synonym for demonstrates again, *phaneroo*...the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy which He prepared beforehand for glory."

Now follow this. Again we see God allowing sin to put on a display, to put on a demonstration. What if, although willing, please, willing would be better translated determining, determining. "What if God determining to demonstrate, to display, to openly show His wrath and make His power known endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?" Listen to this. God allowed evil to put His righteousness on display. God allowed evil to put His love on display. And God allowed evil to put His wrath on display. That's verse 22, to demonstrate His wrath. And by doing that, He put His holiness on display.

Would we know God the way we know God without sin? Of course not. We wouldn't know that He is as righteous as He is, as loving as He is, and as holy as He is. God allowed sin so that He could display His wrath. His holy anger over sin, His judgment on sinners...no sin, no display of righteousness, no display of love and no display of holiness. God endured sin. I love the way it's phrased, "He endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction." It was a thing that God had to endure. His holy nature had to endure it. He endured it patiently so that in the end He could display His wrath and its full eternal power.

But not just His wrath. Verse 23, "And He did so in order that He might make known," we could translate this demonstrate as well, "The riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy." To display His mercy. God also willed to make known, *gnorizo*, to...to display His mercy on the vessels which He had prepared beforehand for glory, that's election. No sin, no mercy...no grace, no forgiveness. No salvation. But it is God's nature to manifest His righteousness and to display and manifest His love, and to display and manifest His wrath, and to display and manifest His grace and His holiness. Listen, the whole reason God ordained evil to exist was for His own glory sake, so that forever and ever holy angels and redeemed saints would give Him glory in full comprehension of all His attributes. Prior to sin God was not worshiped fully for His righteousness against the background of unrighteousness. He was not worshiped nor could be fully for His love until He demonstrated the kind of love that loves enemy, rebel sinners. He was not worshiped fully for His holiness until His wrath displayed how He hated sin. And He was not worshiped for His grace until He displayed forgiveness and mercy on the elect. In every case there is this great disclosure of the nature of God. Why? To display His glory.

Paul gives us a demonstration of this. Go back to verse 17, an illustration and he draws it from Exodus chapter 9 and verse 16. "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh...here's a perfect illustration...for this very purpose I raised you up." Wow, God raised up Pharaoh? God was in charge of Pharaoh being born, growing up in a royal family, ascending to the throne of Egypt? And then being the ruler over the exiled children of Israel, and then making life unbearable for them and then all the plagues, and then all the rest that followed, and the exodus and the drowning of Pharaoh and his entire army? You mean God raised him up? Yes, "For this purpose I raised you up," and here comes our word again, to do what? "To demonstrate My power in you." And it was the power of judgment and it was the power of salvation, Passover, the slain lamb, the blood on the doorposts, that is the greatest Old Testament symbol of salvation, is it not? I raised you up to display My wrath and to display My grace.

Why, God? End of verse 17, "That My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth." In the end, God does everything for His own glory and He has been glorified throughout the whole earth by His people and He will be in the millennial earth and in the new heaven and the new earth. The greatest good, dear ones, is God's glory. The greatest good is God's glory. And if you don't understand that, then you don't have a God-centered world view.

So how do we respond to that? Go back to verse 15...or, 14. Are you struggling with that? Are you saying it doesn't seem fair? Verse 14, "What shall we say? There's no injustice with God, is there?" No, no, no, no. We can't accuse God of being unrighteous. He has a right to do what He wants. I'll have mercy on whom I have mercy. I'll have compassion on whom I have compassion. It doesn't depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. Verse 18, "So then He has mercy on whom He desires. He hardens whom He desires. You will to me...you will say to me then, why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" Are you going to argue with God. Are you going to debate the point that God did what He wanted to do? And he reaches right back to what we read earlier, verse 21 from the Psalms, "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?" Are you forgetting who's in charge?

"And He did it all," verse 23, "that He might make known the riches of His glory." There's no other explanation. It reminds me of Job, doesn't it you? Job has all that trouble that God allowed to come into his life. Satan comes down, kills everybody in his family except his wife who was a pain. Told him to curse God and die. Takes away everything he owns. Gives him all kinds of illnesses. And then he gives him a bunch of stupid friends who give him bad answers, and bad theology. We're only valuable as long as they sat in silence for seven days, and as soon as they opened their mouth, all wisdom left. He's all alone. He's trying to sort out what's going on. And he wants an answer from God. It doesn't seem right. Doesn't seem fair. And God finally speaks to him in Job 38, "The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind," Job 38, "'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?'" What an introduction. Do I hear somebody down there mumbling? "Gird up your loins like a man and I'll ask you, you instruct Me. 'Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?'" That is to say, "If I needed advice from you, I'd have gotten it. I created everything without you. Tell Me if you have understanding. Who said it was measurements since you know? Who stretched the line on it? Where were its bases sunk? Who laid the cornerstone when the morning star sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Who enclosed the sea with doors and bursting forth it went out from the womb and I made a cloud its garment, thick darkness its swaddling band." The language is just rich. Verse 12, "Have you ever in your life commanded the morning? Have you ever caused the dawn to know its place, Job? Have you ever entered into the springs of the sea, verse 16, or walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been revealed to you? Have you seen the gates of deep darkness? Have you understood the expanse of the earth? Tell Me, if you know so much."

Wow, this is what I call tough talk. "So, Job, where's the place to the dwelling of light? Where is the source of light? Where does light come from? And by the way, in verse 25, who has a cleft or a channel for the flood and a way for the thunderbolt to bring rain on the land without people? Can you bind...in verse 31...the chain of the Pleiades, and loose the cords of Orion? And lead forth a constellation in its season and guide the Bear with her satellites? Can you run all the bodies moving in orbit in space? Can you command the clouds...in verse 34...and tell them what to do with water?"

Oh, let me get a little simpler, verse 1 of chapter 39, "Do you know the time the mountain goats give birth? Can you count the months they fulfill, or do you know the time they give birth? And who set a wild donkey free, and who loosed the bonds of the swift donkey?" I mean, it's just amazing, this is just tough talk. You have no right to question Me. Chapter 40 verse 1, "The Lord said to Job, 'Will the fault finder content with the Almighty?'" In verse 4, "Okay, Job says to the Lord, 'I'm insignificant, what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth.'" He's done. Tough talk is I do what I do because I'm God. I do what I do for My glory. And Job got it. Chapter 42, and you have to...you have to get the end of it, verse 1, "Job answered the Lord, said, 'I know You can do all things.'" I affirm that You're the God that Scripture says You are and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have declared that which I do not understand, things too wonderful for me which I didn't know. This is the right response, I don't even know what I'm talking about. Hear now and I'll speak, I'll ask you and do you instruct me?

And then I love this. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, now my eyes sees Thee, therefore I retract and I repent in dust and ashes." Tough talk and Job buckles and says "God, I have no right to question You, You are God and You have every right to put Your glory on full display." And evil makes that happen. We will spend forever and ever in the presence of God extolling Him in ways that never would be possible had He not allowed and ordained without ever creating or being the source of it the evil that temporarily dominates the creation. And in His perfect timing, it will all be over and He will destroy this entire universe in a holocaust described by Peter as the elements melting with fervent heat and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth in which only eternal righteousness exists, but we will forever worship with an understanding of the full display of His glory.

Father, we thank You for the insight that comes to us from Your Word. You've told us why. It's not left to mystery. I'm God, I do what I do for My own glory. And how wonderful is it that You have chosen us to be part of that eternal assembly who will give You glory and who will sing praise to the Lamb who was slain. We thank You for the power in the truth. Help us to help others, to answer the deep questions with the straightforward revelation that You've given us. We are in awe, O God, that You have chosen us to be a part of that redeemed community who will understand forever the glory that came and was fully displayed because of sin. What a privilege. We thank You in Christ's name. Amen.

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