



*Prayer
&
Providence*

Lesson 9 – Providence and the Problem of Evil



Learning to Pray from the Psalms

Psalms of Nature and Creation

Psalms 8, 19, 29, 33, 65, 104, 148

- Ps 29:1 Give unto the LORD, O you mighty ones, Give unto the LORD glory and strength. 2 Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.
- Notice the beautiful, poetic praise in Ps. 65:7-13
 - **“You who still the noise of the seas, The noise of their waves, And the tumult of the peoples. They also who dwell in the farthest parts are afraid of Your signs; You make the outgoings of the morning and evening rejoice. You visit the earth and water it, You greatly enrich it; The river of God is full of water; You provide their grain, For so You have prepared it. You water its ridges abundantly, You settle its furrows; You make it soft with showers, You bless its growth. You crown the year with Your goodness, And Your paths drip with abundance. They drop on the pastures of the wilderness, And the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; The valleys also are covered with grain; They shout for joy, they also sing.”**



Providence and The Problem of Evil

- Why must we consider evil in light of God's providence?
 - **Because much of His providential care is directly about combating or overcoming various evils in this world.**
- Note the following premises:
 - **'God is' and He is absolute in His attributes – holiness, intelligence, wisdom, knowledge and power.**
 - **Man is a moral creature with the ability to choose his own actions. And the consequences of his choices must be considered.**
 - **God put man and His creation under law: law in the physical world to control and direct it; law in the moral realm to govern the free beings in it.**
- Obedience or disobedience will bring inevitable consequences that produce good or evil results.



The Problem of Evil

- ‘evil’ (Hebrew ra’) – bad physically: that which is undesirable – disease, calamity, destruction by natural forces; also, that which is morally wicked or sinful
- In the beginning, a choice was set before Adam and Eve when God placed the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden
 - **Gen. 2:9,16-17**
 - **A test of loyalty to God; one of the first laws we see expressed; violation of it would bring consequences**
 - **In no way was God tempting man (Jms. 1:13)**
 - **Temptation would come from another source – Satan**
- So then, what was the origin of Satan?



The Origin of Satan

- Was he a created being?
 - We can infer that he was created as were all other beings
 - Col. 1:16 For by Him (Christ) all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.
 - Having been created for Him, Satan must have been created for good
- God created everything and called it “very good” (Gen. 1:31). If that is the case, how do we explain the origin of Satan? (consider Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2:4; Mt. 25:41)



Jude 1:6 “And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day”

2 Pet. 2:4-5,9-10 “For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment ... then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment ...”

Mt. 25:41-43 “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels ...”

- These angels, allied with the devil, sinned at some point
- Can we assume the same about the devil?
- 1 Jn. 3:8 – “... the devil has sinned from the beginning ...”



Introduction of Evil

- When Adam and Eve gave into the temptation by the devil, they made a choice and ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil
 - **This was an act of their free will**
 - **As a consequence, curses were pronounced by God which affected both of them and would bring a degree of evil upon all to come after.**
 - **Gen. 3:16-19**



Satan's power and influence in the world

- What types of evils has Satan been responsible for in the past?
 - **In the debate over the integrity of Job, God allowed Satan to act within certain limitations**
- Job 1:12-19; 2:5-7; 17:6; 19:13-22
 - **Through evil men: loss or death of livestock and servants**
 - **Through natural disaster: death of livestock and servants**
 - **Through natural disaster: killed all of his children**
 - **Through the evil of disease: loss of health**
 - **Through other influence: a social outcast; religious and philosophical evil**
- Luke 13:10-16
 - **Through disease: a woman's infirmity for 18 years**



“Although we may not be able to determine the extent to which Satan acts in the natural world to bring various calamities and evils upon man, we can know that in the past he has so acted; and even now he may act with divinely prescribed limitations.”

Homer Hailey



God and 'evil'

- The word 'evil' has a more general meaning than we sometimes think about. How would you define it especially in light of such passages as Deut. 30:15, Amos 3:6 (KJV), and Isa. 45:7 (KJV)? Since God is good (Mk. 10:18; Jms. 1:17), how do we understand these passages?
 - **"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil ..."**
(Deut. 30:15ff)
 - **ra` , rah – bad; evil (natural or moral); adversity, affliction, calamity, distress, evil**
 - **Only when life and good are rejected, are death and evil inevitable consequences**
- God is good – Mark 10:18; Jms. 1:17
- But God is also just! – Isa. 30:18, 27-28



Evil in the moral realm

- The problem of evil in the moral realm is easier to explain than that in the physical world
 - **It began in the garden, but it continued until the flood**
 - **Gen. 6:5-6 – evil thoughts and actions brought evil consequences**
- In the moral realm, evil is the consequence of sin, wickedness and rebellion against God. Note Rom. 1:18-32 and the ultimate result of sin and its evil fruits. How can man avoid this consequence? (Isa. 1:16; Ezek. 33:11; Rom. 12:9; 1 Pet. 3:9-12)
 - **“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean”**
 - **“Turn, turn from your evil ways!”**
 - **“Abhor what is evil”**



Satan's Defeat

- God's redemptive plan for man's salvation also included the defeat and final destruction of Satan – Gen. 3:15
- Satan at work in the OT – book of Job; Zech. 3:1-2
- Satan in the NT
 - **More visible – shown as a powerful spirit being**
 - **Begins with the temptation (Mt. 4:1-11); Jesus overcomes**
 - **See Jesus prevailing over the forces of darkness – casting out demons and healing diseases**
 - **Even His disciples are given such power – note Lk. 10:17-20**
 - **Jesus falsely charged – Lk. 11:15**
 - The truth – Lk. 11:17-22; Mt. 12:29 – Jesus 'stronger than him'
 - Note v. 22 – an allusion to and fulfillment of Isa. 53:12
 - **Only power Satan had was what the Lord allowed him to have**



Satan's Defeat

- Just before His death, Jesus said the following:
 - “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out ...” (Jn. 12:31-33)
 - In the cross, the victory of Christ and the defeat of Satan would be accomplished – fulfilling Gen. 3:15
- After His resurrection, Jesus claimed all authority:
 - Mt. 28:18 – “... All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”
- Christ had accomplished what He had come to do
 - Col. 2:15 “Having disarmed principalities and powers ...”
 - 1 Jn. 3:8 “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”
 - Heb. 2:14 “... through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil ...”



The Christian vs. Satan Today

- Does this mean that Satan is no longer at work in this world?
 - **No; continues his work of deceit in a more limited capacity**
 - **He still “walks about like a lion seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8)**
- What are those limitations?
 - **Has not been revealed to us**
 - **See that he was still at work even after Christ ascended**
 - **Book of Revelation – continued to work through the evil power of Rome and the emperors during the early church**
 - **That great power was defeated and Christ was victorious in that instance as well (see Rev. 19-20)**
 - **Satan was bound once again – Rev. 20:2ff**
 - **So, what power does he continue to wield in this world?**



Christians Need not Fear

- God's providence is still at work
- Rom. 8:28-30
 - **“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son ...”**
- God's providence!
 - **Purpose, foreknowledge, all things working together – for the good of those who love God**
- We can never know how God brings about our spiritual good, but we see that He uses whatever means necessary to do just that!



“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 8:31-39



Next Week – Lesson 10 – God is in Control

1. As the Creator of all things, does not God then have the right and ability to control all things? (see Psa. 33:6; 148:5,6; 93:1-2; 103:19-22; Jn. 1:1-3; Col. 1:16-17; Rev. 4:11)
2. Read Psa. 104. Note all the ways in which God controls His creation.
3. Read Job 38:1-38. What are some examples of God's control over the inanimate world?
4. Read Job 38:39 – 42:6. What are some examples of God's control over the animate world? Also, read Mt. 6:25-34.