



Opening Prayer

Last time we began to explore one of the reasons why it is convenient to assert that God “distanced or disinterested:” it provides a solution to the problem of evil—How could a good God allow all this evil to happen? But there is another, much less philosophical explanation. Why else might people want to prefer a god who is distant?

Let's Review... Providential Points

- Preservation: God's daily care and the sustaining of his creation.

Psalms 104:14 He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth.

b.) Is God himself bound by natural means?

Exodus 34:28 Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant—the Ten Commandments.

1 Kings 17:16 The jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah.

- Concurrence/Cooperation: God enables creation to function and retain its properties. If God were to remove his presence and power, nothing could exist.

Hebrews 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

- Governance: God directs the affairs of creation to accomplish his will.

a.) What is true about God's knowledge of the world?

Isaiah 46:10a "I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come."

Revelation 22:13 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."

b.) Characterize God's will based on the following passages.

1 Timothy 2:4 [God our Savior] wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Romans 12:2 Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Isaiah 46:10b "...I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please."

Proverbs 21:30 There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD.

c.) At the same time God does hold individuals responsible for their resistance to his will.

Ezekiel 18:4 "The soul who sins is the one who will die."

Acts 7:51 "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!"

d.) Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection most fully presents (but does not fully explain) the intersection of the mystery of God's foreknowledge, his almighty power, his eternal plan of salvation, and man's free will.

Revelation 13:8 ...All whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

Isaiah 53:10 It was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

Acts 4:27-28 “Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.”

e.) God’s power and grace are such that he causes BOTH good and evil work out to accomplish his good will for the elect.

2. As you read the following passages, identify why it may *seem to some* that God is not interested in the world.

Romans 8:19-25 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

Matthew 24:3-14 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” ⁴ Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. ⁶ You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains. ⁹ Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰ At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹² Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³ but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

3. In what ways do these passages demonstrate that Jesus is interested in what happens in the world?

4. What lessons are there in suffering?

2 Corinthians 1:3-7 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. ⁵ For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. ⁶ If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. ⁷ And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

Galatians 6:2 Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Isaiah 38:15-17 “But what can I say? He has spoken to me, and he himself has done this. I will walk humbly all my years because of this anguish of my soul. ¹⁶ Lord, by such things men live; and my

spirit finds life in them too. You restored me to health and let me live. ¹⁷ Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back.”

2 Corinthians 12:10 That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

5. What is the greatest evidence that God is not distant nor disinterested?

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son.”

Isaiah 53:5-6 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Ephesians 1:22 God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.

6. How do these truths impact how you view the world?

Group Discussion

1. How might a skeptic respond to the following arguments that God cares for the world?

- “God sends rain and gives sunlight and makes crops grow so we can eat.”
- “People care about each other and reflect God’s love.”
- “God gives life to everything—childbirth and in nature.”

2. Some say, “If only God would appear and show us that he is in control, then we’d recognize that he cares!” Remember, he did that in Jesus and most people rejected him. As we have seen, God does care about what happens in the world, but he does wear *masks*. He often works through the people or institutions he places in our lives. List some of them. How are these agents of his care and blessing?

3. Based on the truths we’ve learned today how would you respond to a coworker who says, “God seems like he’s a million miles away right now—he doesn’t care about what I’m going through!”