



Does God Allow # 1

Hello everyone. Welcome to “Notes from the Presence.” For the next few articles, I am going to talk about the loaded subject – “Does God allow?”

It seems like there is a massive amount of heartache in the world right now. As I write, I have 2 friends who have recently lost spouses to cancer, one uncle with cancer, one aunt who just underwent a whole year of treatment for cancer, numerous friends with disaster looming in their lives, sickness everywhere, children with various syndromes, I have a friend with a serious lung condition, another friend with a baffling virus picked up from a trip abroad, and another friend who just last week suddenly lost his mother, and the list goes on.

I was also recently at a retreat where we spent some time in small discussion groups and it seemed like almost every person had a huge amount of hurt, pain, loss, death, and financial struggle to deal with. In the group discussions, one question kept coming up over and over - why does God allow this to happen? Another way to phrase this sentiment would be - if God is a God of love and if He can do anything, then why did He let my son die, or why am I suffering, or why is my child sick? In the end, the logical conclusion went something like this - we can't understand why God does what He does, and we just have to trust Him to bring peace in the middle of the situations. In some cases, there was a life long struggle with trusting God after a difficult loss or death.

It is from these recent experiences that I would like to write today. If you are reading this article, you are likely used to my slightly altered point of view by now and I certainly mean no disrespect with the contents of today's blog. I have suffered tragedy and pain as well as the next person. However, I view this subject from a bit of a different slant and I wanted to write it out today - even if just for my sake in order to clarify what I believe.

It is baffling to look at the bible and see how many times God is described as "good." In fact, a close look at these scriptures will show us that His goodness is more than just a cute character trait. "Good" is actually the very core of God's make-up. In the beginning of Genesis we see over and over - and God saw that it was "good." Everything He created was good. When He created humankind, it was "very good." The chronicles of God's goodness continue throughout the bible like a golden thread. It is weaved into the very fabric of everything we know and experience. God's goodness, glory, presence, and face are also inseparable. When Moses asked to see God's glory, God made all of His goodness pass before him. We see the goodness of God in the light of the glory of His face. His goodness emanates from His person. Jesus declared the Father as good. Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of Lights. You can't separate God and His goodness, they are one in the same.

For this reason, when we see tragedy, the first thought that comes to our mind is: "But God, I thought you were good." God's goodness doesn't seem to line up with our reality. So what do we do with this conflicting information? The first thing many of us do is alter our definition of "good" to try and match our experience. In other words, we assume that God is good, but it is a different kind of twisted, cosmic, out of this world, heavenly goodness that somehow we can't understand - at least not while we are here on this earth.

In this context, I have a series of questions for us today. What is your definition of the word "good?" Think about it for a minute. Look it up in your dictionary just to be sure if you like. Now, think of God. When it comes to God's character, is your definition of the word "good" different than what you were thinking a few moments ago?

I would like to make a simple statement today. If we took the same definition for "good" that many of us have assigned to our heavenly Father, and pinned it on a good friend, we would never speak with that friend again. Our "good" friend would be guilty of allowing us to be sick for unknown purposes, taking our loved ones away for a higher calling, allowing disaster in our lives but then thankfully bringing comfort and peace in the middle of the situation, and never really answering the difficult questions when hard things come into our lives - just telling us to trust them in the middle of it all. Wow! I have just have one thing to say. I don't want that kind of friend and I certainly don't want that kind of father. If that is the definition of goodness we are talking about here, get it away from me. What am I saying here? There has to be another way of viewing this whole scenario - one that actually makes sense.

First of all, if God is good, then He is simply good in the very finest and most delightful definition of the word. We need to settle that verity in our minds once and for all. In

fact, from what I know of God, He embodies character traits such as "good" to a degree of perfection that is humanly impossible. Goodness is one of the fruits of the spirit (for goodness sake), so why would God ask us to be good in a different way than He is good? Second, we need to find out where the not good things are coming from - what is their source? If it is not a weird, twisted version of a good God, then where do we look? Who is the culprit? Also, what does God have to do with allowing these things. Can we even find this concept in the bible?

OK, from my current rapidly escalating word count, I have obviously chomped off a bit more than I can chew here in one readable article. That means I am reluctantly going to leave you with a huge cliff hanger. I am so soooooorry!! I am going to sign off today with the first verse/chorus words to a beautiful song that we have been singing past few years. I also promise to take this subject up again in my next article with full gusto. I hope to answer at least some of my own questions by the time this is all over.

Good Good Father - Pat Barrett, Anthony Brown

Oh, I've heard a thousand stories of what they think You're like
But I've heard the tender whisper of love in the dead of night
And You tell me that You're pleased
And that I'm never alone

You're a Good, Good Father
It's who You are, it's who You are, it's who You are
And I'm loved by You
It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am

Thanks for reading today. Jesus is real and our God is a good, good Father - period!