

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW (fill in the blank)?

It seems that I have heard this question posed more in the public forum over the last few years than ever before, or maybe I'm just becoming more aware of it. I've listened to many explanations from fellow believers, but none have ever addressed the key issue in my opinion. I think the problem stems from trying to be as loving and understanding as possible and trying not to alienate their questioners or the listening public. What I am about to say is based on confidence that the Bible is the Word of God and is without error or contradiction.

The key point in answering this question involves the matter of perspective. We try to rationalize the circumstances that God allows and/or brings about to impact mankind from man's logic and perspective. To find the answer, we need to try to look at the situation through the eyes of God. When God looks down on planet earth, He primarily sees two types of people:

- men of faith who are looking forward to eternity with Him
John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
- men of unbelief who are on their way to eternal condemnation
John 3:18 "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

A very important truth declared in scripture is that God's ways are much higher than our ways and far beyond our understanding.

Isaiah 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Romans 11:33 "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

God's Word also tells us that God never changes; He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Malachi 3:6 "For I am the LORD, I change not...."

Hebrews 13:8 "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

James 1:17 "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."

Another truth clearly stated in scripture is that God is not willing that any man should perish; His desire is for all men to be saved.

Ezekiel 18:32 "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Throughout scripture, God is presented as a faithful and loving Father. One way He shows that love is by chastening, rebuking and scourging His children as needed for their spiritual well-being.

Hebrews 12:6 "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

Revelation 3:19 "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

Hand in hand with that thought, the scripture tells us that "ALL things work together for good" in the life of one that loves God.

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."

Sometimes, as in the case of Job, God is glorified as His child grows in faith through testing and/or trials that he/she does not understand.

In the book of Joel God speaks of a great time of judgment known as the "day of the Lord." He is very clear to express His desire that the people respond to this judgment by turning to Him in repentance for deliverance.

Joel 2:12-13 & 32 "Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil....And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call."

In the book of Revelation during the time we refer to as "the tribulation" (the last seven years on earth before Jesus comes back to rule as King), God makes a point to send special angelic messengers to urge men to fear God and glorify Him and to avoid taking the mark of the beast. Taking the mark of the beast seals one's destiny in the lake of fire for eternity.

Revelation 14:6 & 9-11 "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people....And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out

without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."

Though I believe the primary purposes of the things He allows and/or brings about on planet earth are those stated above, I believe that we can't ignore the truth that God also acts to judge sin—e.g., Sodom and Gomorrah.

Ezekiel 16:49–50 "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good."

Sometimes sin has its own consequences that God allows to follow to their natural conclusion. Sometimes God intervenes personally to bring about that judgment in the lives of individuals (e.g., David's sin with Bathsheba and the death of their son) or the course of a city/nation (e.g., the captivity of the Jewish people) or even the planet as a whole (e.g., the flood of Noah's time).

So why does God allow suffering? God is always trying to get unbelieving men to turn to Him in faith. He is also ever working in the lives of believing men and women to bring them to higher levels of spiritual maturity, stronger faith and a more intimate relationship with Him. And sometimes He acts in judgment against sin.

Why does God allow sin in the first place? If God had not given man the ability to make his own choices, he would simply be a robot without the ability to truly love. God wanted fellowship and love—not toys or robots.

Maybe this explanation is a bit too simplistic, but I believe it reflects the heart of God according to His Word.