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Why Does It Seem Like God Hates Some and Favors Others?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about whether the fact that some people go through intense difficulties and suffering indicates that God hates some and favors others, and whether someone is being abused because God doesn't think she's worshiping him enough.

* I constantly feel like God hates me because of a congenital defect that affects my career choices, my self-worth, and my bitterness towards God. Why does it seem like God hates some and favors others?

* If God lets Satan live to bring God glory and to test us, does that mean my friend is being abused by her mom's boyfriend because God doesn't think she's worshiping him enough?

Transcript

You're listening to Amy Hall and Greg Koukl on the hashtag SDRaskPodcasts. Hey, Greg. Alright, let's get right into the question here.

This one comes from Rider. Greetings, STR. I was wondering if you can give insight into God's plan.

I constantly feel like God hates me. I have a congenital defect effect, which constantly affects my career choices, my self-worth, and my bitterness towards God. Why does it seem like God hates some and favors others? Well, I was inclined to make a joke at first when he said, give this insight into God's plan, and I was saying, oh, yeah, well, I've got that all figured out.

No problem. What's your question? But now this has a lot more gravity to it. But in a certain sense, the more frivolous response is still a factor.

We don't know what God's plan is, by and large, and especially here, as it touches the individual lives of people. We have a bigger picture. We can see what God intended, what went wrong, and what God is doing to fix it.

This is a big part of what the story of reality entails. But I have a chapter towards the end

entitled in between, or titled rather, in between. Entitled means something else, titled in between.

And I wrote that chapter because of a question, something like this that was asked when I was up in Fairbanks, Alaska. And a doctor asked me, his patients asked him, if there's a God, why did their child die? Something to that effect. And I guess the way I answered it, I developed this in the chapter, is that we can understand the big picture.

We can know why, just to use warfare as an analog here, we know why we went to war against the Japanese and the Germans, along with the other allies in the Second World War. We know that there were going to be casualties. We had very good reason to think if we persist, we were going to win this war, because both the Japanese and Germans were locked, land locked in one case, and water locked in another with not a lot of resources.

We had unlimited resources. In fact, the United States, we weren't even being attacked. So there was ever recently we were going to win.

We just had to stick with it. So we knew all the big issues, but we could never tell why is it that one soldier died at any given day on that particular piece of real estate in France? Why that person and not some other person? When you get down to the granular details, God doesn't tell us that. We don't know that.

But I'll tell you one thing, it is not because he doesn't like us, and he wants us to suffer for illicit reasons, as was kind of suggested there. I have a little pamphlet that I have next to my reading table, and it's all about the sovereignty of God. Basically, what this pamphlet states goes through with biblical justification is that there's nothing that is going to come into the Christian's life that hasn't already passed through the hands of God for some good purpose.

God allows, just like Job, there's the paradigm, God allowed these things to happen, but he was never out of control, and it wasn't because he hated Job, and wanted Job to suffer. He had a greater purpose, and I want you to think of Psalm 23 for a moment, and what I'm going to say is not going to be satisfying to a lot of people, but we know how the Psalm starts. The Lord is my shepherd.

I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

Well, that's nice. He restores my soul. Wow, next line.

He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. So, when we start out in the Psalm, the statement is God's the one who's in charge of us. He's taking care of us.

He does these things that are great, and he's looking after the long-term well-being of us, restores our soul, but he's also looking to glorify himself in the way he works with us. He guides us in paths of righteousness for his name's sake, not for us sake, for his name's sake too. And so, both of these things are involved when we are following the shepherd in our individual lives,

when he is caring for us in multiple ways.

One of them is to make us better for ourselves. Good comes out of the hardship, but also because he is seeking to glorify himself in what he does in us. And biblically, this entails hardship always, for a momentary light affliction is producing for us eternal way to glory.

Second Corinthians 4. And Paul says in Romans 8, I do not count the sufferings of this life to bear any comparison to the goodness that's to come. Now, he doesn't say there that the sufferings are producing it in that line, but he does say earlier in that chapter, he says that we know that God causes all things to work for good for those who love him and are called according to purpose. For those whom he pre, he foreknew he predestined to become conformed to the image of his son.

So there it makes it clear that the hardship are to cause a result in us to be more like Jesus. Now, if we don't have a firm conviction about that, and this is taught in many ways in the New Testament, I just gave you three or four references. But if we don't keep reminding ourselves of that, it is very easy for us to be overwhelmed by the difficulties and hardships that are necessarily part of everybody's life, but especially the Christian, because we have foes that the world does not have.

The world of along with all of that, there's no conflict. It's the Christian who is in a position to stand against that and has God working in his life to cause things to work together, to conform to Christ, that we have unique set of hardships. And it seems like our dear brother, here writer, is experiencing that, but is interpreting that as God's animosity towards him.

And that's not the case. In Romans chapter 12, the writer identifies a fact of child rearing. All parents discipline their children, and they discipline their children if they're good.

Now they don't do a perfect job. But God does. And he identifies there all of that discipline that God does for our good at the moment seems not to be joyful.

It's sorrowful. It's a bummer. But afterwards, he says, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

So these are all particulars that the scripture brings to bear on these, the kind of challenge that writer is talking about here at hardship. And it is really critical that we that we interpret our circumstances in light of the truth. Or else we're going to come to the wrong conclusions about it.

All right. And writer has a congenital defect, because this, you know, this is a special hardship. Okay.

But it has caused a bitterness, because somehow it is, it is reflected on his own sense of self worth. And instead of seeing himself in Christ, it let that be the foundation of his self worth. And now he's a child of God, who is being brought along in the midst of difficult circumstances to a

good end.

And I'll just say this is not theoretical to me. I like all Christians go through hardship. And the way that I go through hardship is sometimes it feels debilitating at the time is to remind myself of these truths, and that it is not for not.

It is not because God doesn't like me because he's mad at me that he's punishing me that he's just trying to make it hard at me. Do I ever struggle with bitterness? Yeah, I do. But the way I deal with it is I have to go back to these truths, many of which I mentioned already.

And I know these things off the top of my head because I use them to remind myself of reality. And that helps me deal with my feelings in the moment. If there's one thing we know for sure, it is that suffering does not mean God hates you, and not suffering does not mean God favors you.

Because we find examples contrary to that, in both directions, throughout scripture, you mentioned Job, no one suffered more than Job, and he was favored by God more than anyone else at the time. So his suffering had a purpose to reveal God to the world, to bring about his glory, but also for Job, to shape Job, and to reveal his love for God, and to honor Job. We honor Job to this day.

So you cannot determine, and I know it is such a temptation to think that if you're suffering, it's because God hates you. Or he doesn't love you. I mean, that is such a temptation.

I think we all have to fight. You're right, Greg. Think about what David says.

I think it's David. It might not be David who does this song, but it's in more than one song. But he'll say, why are these wicked people thriving? Why are they doing so well? Look at them.

They go down to the so even David is saying, why is this happening? But at the end of these, or whoever it was, I don't remember if it's David, but at the end, it always comes around to, but I'm going into, I would rather be in your sanctuary, and you are my portion. You are my reward. I will be with you.

And he sees that being close to God is better than being in comfort going into the grave. And there's a sense in which all these things that are happening to you, they're working towards your happiness in God now and ultimately the better you know God, the better off you will be now and in the end. And you can ask anyone this.

Look at look at Johnny Erickson Taddish. I mentioned her all the time, but who has more of a right to say, I would rather not be in this wheelchair, but she says she wouldn't trade it because of what she's learned about God. Now you might not be in that position yet where you can say that, and that's okay.

But you do have to trust that that's what God is working towards, that you would know him

well. Or in her case, struggling with cancer, which he has done. And chronic pain.

Yeah. So, but look at John the Baptist. God loved him, right? He died in early death.

Stephen stoned. God loved him. We see this throughout.

Look at the people in the Old Testament, you have the kings who are really evil. And then God says, well, all of your, all of your relatives, all of your future people are going to be destroyed. But I'm going to take your son right now because he's the only person I see any good in.

So he actually suffers an early death. And it's because God favors him. So we can't make that sort of judgment.

We don't know what God is doing. What we have to do is look at God's character and what he's done. And Jesus came to earth to suffer and die for us.

He proved objectively his love. So whatever happens, we have to look at it within that framework and know that God has a purpose. He's working all 28, 29, he's working all things together for good to make us like Christ.

And it can feel very hard, whatever you're going through. And sometimes it's hard to see that other people are going through things too, especially if it's something that's particularly difficult. But I think we have to remember objectively that God proved his love for us.

And we have to look at this as an opportunity God is giving us to learn how to depend on him and to trust him and to know him better and actively try to know him better. Because if we can do that, and if we can be like Job where we continue to trust him, that brings honor to both you and to God. But I think about what Peter says in 1 Peter 4, beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you.

On then he says, but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of his glory, you may rejoice with exaltation. In other words, we're suffering now, we have glory later. Yeah, there's a payoff.

So whatever suffering you're going through now, just remember, particularly if it's coming because you love Christ. If you suffer with him now, you will you will glory with him later. You'll rejoice with him later.

So Peter talks about how all over the world Christians are suffering. All you have to do is read through the New Testament and mark down when people suffer. When there's comments about his suffering, you'll see that suffering does not mean he hates you.

So all of these things I think we have to work at to understand and really truly believe. Okay, let's go to a question from Brianna. I've learned that God made Satan or let's him live to bring glory to God and test us.

My friend from group is being abused by her mom's boyfriend. Does God not think she's worshiping him enough? Well, this is a little bit similar to our last question and there is no retribution from God on any Christian for anything. And the reason I could say that with confidence is because all of that punishment was taken on Jesus at the cross.

And the work of the cross makes this clear when we study it. The writer of Hebrews chapter 10 talks about the perfect sacrifice to take away all sin. There is no longer any reason to do the sacrifice over and over because the sin is taken care of as far as the east is from the west.

That's how far God has removed our sins from him, though they be scarlet, they should be white as snow. These are statements in the text there citing the Old Testament actually. This is the stable, consistent attitude of God regarding the sin and his own people.

Now there are times where chastisement is in order, but that's because a person is where word and there's a Christian is and there's discipline to put them on the right track. But in this circumstance, this is just evil that's befalling the Christian. Why would anybody think in light of the kinds of things we've been talking about that that evil is a payback on them from God for something they did? This is a deficient understanding of the work of the cross in my view and I hope, I feel bad for anyone who kind of draws that conclusion.

I remember when I was a kid, you know, and I was being Spartan off to my mom or something, then I turned around and run into something, stubbed my whole or whatever, right after I was Sparta God. And she said, God, see, God is punishing you for what you just did, you know, naughty boy. Well, I don't think that's good theology, you know, punishment will come later.

And it isn't just now sometimes there are consequences, but it wasn't in that case, running into something was the consequence of turning around and not paying attention. It wasn't I get hurt because God engineered me to run into something because I was not nice to my mom. Okay.

And I think sometimes, depending on a person's upbringing or understanding of God, they're going to be tempted to think, okay, God's getting back at me for something. Now, God can certainly use hardships and difficulties to get people's attention. And this is going to especially the case of a non Christian, but can do it with Christians as well.

That is he is he is capable of using a bad thing that happens to you for good in your life. It doesn't mean that he's causing these things to happen because you don't worship in enough. So I'm going to punish you by bringing this guy into your life.

And he's going to be mean to you. I mean, that's the I think that is unbecoming of the character of God and not the way God deals with his children. And so in this particular case, is it Brianna's friend? Yes.

Yeah. It would be best to try to communicate to Brianna some of the things I was just saying that this is not the way God deals with his own children. He's gracious to them.

He loves them. He is kind to them. Now kindness sometimes means allowing discipline or hardship.

But he's not in retribution mode anymore. That's reserved for non-Christians. That is not for believers.

God has not put a stop to all evil. He just hasn't. And this shows up in our lives in different ways.

And we honor him when we seek justice. And we we can't know everything he's doing in our lives through that. All we can do is look at again, objectively, we look at the cross.

God is sovereign, God is wise, God cares about justice. God is good and God loves us. All of those things are proved objectively on the cross.

That means could he change the situation just in the blink of an eye? Yes, he could. But if he doesn't, that doesn't mean it's because he doesn't love us. It doesn't mean that.

There are other things he's working out. God could have prevented Joseph's brothers from selling him into slavery. But he didn't.

In fact, he had a reason for it. Look at the succession of events with Job. And it's interesting how that whole event is introduced.

Look at my servant Job. I mean, there's tender, he was tender-hearted towards Job as he's describing him. Even though you have these progressive worsening set of circumstances that Job has to deal with before he finally is rescued from that by God.

But what I don't want people to hear is that because God has a reason for it, that we should just allow it to continue, that's not the case either. We don't know what God is doing. All we know is what we are called to do.

And that is to seek justice. That is to protect people. We glorify God by rescuing people and by protecting them and by bringing about justice.

It's not that, well, okay, I'm suffering and God is sovereign. Therefore, I should just sit here. No, part of what God's doing is having us reflect him by seeking justice and goodness.

So the fact that God is sovereign doesn't mean we don't try to change our situation. All it means is that ultimately we're safe in his hands. And that means can mean terrible suffering.

So again, this is why we can't trust that everything's going to go right for us. All we can trust is God's character. So you have to understand God's character if you're going to be willing to put yourself in his hands.

To your point about maybe resisting evil that's in our life, even though God may be using it, we still resist it. I'm working through the book of Acts now about in chapter 17, 18, 19, 20, 21. It's

amazing how often the disciples, including Paul, flee circumstances of persecution.

Now in some cases, Paul wanted to jump right in and his disciples said, you're not going to do that. That's too dangerous. We're taking you out of here.

And actually early on, he was lowered over the wall in Antioch and a basket because of the persecution. So this just underscores the notion there are things that are harmful to us that we need to attempt to flee if possible or deal with in some fashion. But whatever we can't avoid, we take that as from the hand of God, that is God allowing it to happen for a purpose in our life.

Not that God's causing it to happen, not in my view at least, but that God's going to let this take place for some greater purpose that he has. So all we can do in those situations is do what God has called us to do, seek what's good. If there is something that can be done to change your situation, do it, get help, seek justice.

Those are all beautiful things that glorify God. It's not that God wants us to wallow in pain and suffering. That's not what's happening.

So again, don't try to figure out what God is doing because I don't think he's revealed that in every situation. But many times you can look back and see what God did and how he brought you where you are today and what the purpose of the suffering that you went through accomplished in you. So it's kind of a difficult thing to understand that God would sovereignly allow these things for purpose and still be good and still want us to fight those things.

But you can look at, you can see this throughout the Bible. You can see this happening. So I hope that helps Brianna and Ryder and we'd love to hear from you.

If you have a question, you can send it in on X with the hashtag STRS. This is Amy Hall and Greg Coco for Stand to Reason.