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Why Do Atheists Get Angry When I Bring up Belief in God?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about why atheists get angry when someone brings up belief in God, how to reconcile God's sovereignty and Satan being the prince of the world, and why the Lord's Prayer says, "Lead us not into temptation," when God would never lead us into temptation.

- * What is the source of the anger I encounter from atheists when I bring up belief in God?
- * How does one reconcile God's sovereignty and Satan being the prince of this world?
- * Why does the Lord's Prayer say, "Lead us not into temptation," when leading us into temptation isn't part of his nature?

Transcript

I'm Amy Hall. I'm here with Greg Cogle, and you're listening to the hashtag S-T-R-S-C-Podcast from Stand to Reason. Sounds good.

What do you got? Okay, Greg, today we have a question from Blair McNay. I'm fascinated by what I would call atheist anger. I have several friends who are atheists, or the newest, newest, derivative, new ages.

When I bring up belief in God, I commonly find two emotions. One, intellectual disgust, two, anger. What is the source of this anger? Oh, one person has put it this way.

There is no God, and I hate him. And this does seem to be characteristic of a lot of people. And I'm not so much in a position to cycle analyze atheists, but others have done so.

And they looked at a lot of famous atheists and have found certain patterns that have to do with their family upbringing, their relationships with their fathers, and stuff like that. Now, I'm not at all dismissing a point of view, atheism, based on the psychological things that might influence a person to believe it. That's an error.

It's called the genetic fallacy. But I think it certainly is fair when you look at the evidence and realize there's a tremendous amount of solid, good, reliable evidence for the existence of God and virtually no reason to believe that only no sound reason to believe that the materialistic universe is all there is. And I mean, people are going to give arguments, whatever.

But the point is it just seems to be very solid and very at least there's evidence, there's compelling evidence for God. But then when you try to encounter atheists, they kind of give you the kind of the intellectual sneer, which I'd like to have them explain. Well, what's the contempt, the intellectual contempt for? Well, believe it, God is stupid.

Well, what's stupid about it? This is the kind of question needs to be asked. What is irrational about it? Whatever. But the anger though is coming from something else.

Anger usually comes from hurt or threat. That's the psychological source of it. You either hurt by someone you care about or you're threatened in some way, and therefore there's anger.

When you have people that are quite confident in their view, they don't usually get angry. Now, there are obviously atheists that are very confident in their view, but it is unusual that they get so angry. Look, if atheism is true, why does it matter what anyone believes? Honestly, well, they hurt people, these religious people.

And what do you mean? And they hurt people. Well, wait a minute. What are you presuming? Well, that hurting people is bad.

But where are you getting your moral criteria now to judge religious people as hurting people, which is bad? I mean, I don't even think they hurt people, but that's another issue, even if they did, even if they were by other standards, moral monsters. Where does the atheist place his feet, so to speak, to be in a position to morally object? Okay, so that's not it, something else is going on. And in this other book that I'm familiar with, I can't remember the title, there wasn't an analysis of these famous atheists and Freud and and they just took a look at their families and their family life, and they're upbringing, and we're offered some thoughts regarding that.

Ultimately, I don't know why they're angry. You might ask him that. Why are you so angry? And generally, there's something else going on, especially if the Christian has been gracious or kind in the whole process, ask them about their anger, because I promise you what they are going to do is they are going to posture moral in front.

They're going to act like they're morally offended by like, there's something morally dangerous about religious views. What was Hitchens's book? How? God is not great. God is not great how religion poisons everything, right? So all right, well, you can't have an idea of poison or misconduct or fault unless you have a teleological understanding of the

world, all right? So, teleological means that there's a goal in mind.

So, when you eat food, the goal of eating food is to get nourishment. When you put poison in the food, you are getting something that you not intend to help your body. The goal of the food, or the telos of the food is now interrupted, all right? So, when Christopher Hitchens, for example, says God is not great how religion poisons everything, what is the nature of the poison? And the thing is you cannot, I don't see how they're going to come up with a way of adopting subtly a teleological view of humanity.

Human beings are supposed to go this way, say, for flourishing. Sam Harris, for example, another one of these so-called New Atheists, flourishing and religion keeps them from flourishing. But of course, the whole idea of flourishing is teleological.

In their mind, flourishing is the goal, is what we're moving towards, what we ought to be aiming at. And even the definition of flourishing is going to change depending on your definition, the nature of reality and your morality. Hitler had an understanding of flourishing.

He wanted to leave in strong. He wanted a living space. He wanted to expand his borders.

They were landlocked pretty much. All these countries around them, they wanted to improve the flourishing for genuine, real, first-class human beings, the Aryans, and all the rest were expendable. So, he had an understanding of flourishing that is different than Sam Harris's.

The point I'm making is all of these things that you see in people's language and talk, they imply an appropriate goal for humanity in a worldview in which there are no such things as goals for humanity. Evolution is non-teleological. It has no purpose.

It has no goal. It doesn't have even as a goal the survival of the species. Survival of the species is just what happens, that's all according to Darwinian mechanisms, which I don't think are sound ultimately.

But notice in strict Darwinian methodology or Darwinian thought, there is no tele, not strict. Any Darwinian thought, there's no teleology. That's the whole point is to show how you can get complexity without any design, no teleology.

But human beings are all made the image of God and they have to live in the world that God made. That tip to Francis Shafer on that one. And therefore, all these atheists have to speak in teleological language because that's when it comes to humanity, because that's the nature of being human.

It's built into us. And so, when they get atheists who have no right to teleology, who deny teleology, start getting angry, well, what's going on here? It's ironic they often will

take what turns out to be the high moral road. What our view is better for mankind and you are interfering with what's good for us, you are evil, you are dangerous, I'm mad at you.

I actually think that's what's going on in a lot of these cases. The only way to uncover it is to ask some questions about the anger. So why are you angry? Well, these people are interfering.

So what? Well, I don't like that. So what? Oh, that's it? Oh, so you're just angry because things happen that you don't like that. By the way, that would be consistent with the materialist view because that's subjectivistic.

It's not objectivistic. But it's very difficult for these folk when they're talking about these things, not to smuggle in moral categories. They yeah, I agree.

Well, I have two answers. The first answer I think just based on what they will tell me just from talking to many atheists over the years, a lot of times it comes back to politics because we have a different starting point, a different worldview starting point than they do. And we have an authority that can't be that can't be overthrown.

And this is actually why atheist nations have been so angry against Christians and cracked down so hard on Christians because they have a higher authority than the state. And therefore, the state can't change their mind. So they can't force them to do what they can't force Christians to do what God has told them not to do.

This is and that's very frustrating to people. They're coming up against something that they think doesn't exist that they cannot fight against that they can't sway you from. And that is very frustrating for them.

And I think it makes them angry because they think that we are being completely irrational and superstitious and adhering to something that isn't real. And we're frustrating all of their plans for society. So all of that I think is very frustrating.

And that is that comes up most often when I'm just asking them for their own reasons or I'm or it's something that they just bring up a lot. So I gather that's what their reason is. Let me talk something in here.

Just if it's politics, politics is a moral enterprise. It's about what's it's about the the proper moral use of power and what's good for the people in general. You can't I mean, unless you're bald-facedly just acknowledging that politics is all about power.

But even those who are dictators are trying to characterize their own political efforts in terms of the common good. So notice how it shifts right away to a moral category. So that's all the point I was making.

So ultimately, I think the best thing to do and you mentioned this Greg is to ask. Ask why they're angry. Make them think about it.

Make them answer that. And these are probably the answers they'll give. Now, that is the level at which you will need to address this.

You know, whatever whatever they tell you. But as Christians, we also know something deeper is going on here and that is they're in rebellion against God. Now, for a lot of people who aren't atheists, maybe there's some other religion or they've made up their own religion or whatever it is, they're also in rebellion against God.

They're also suppressing the truth. But they're kind of doing it in a way that that that maybe makes it a little less difficult for them. So they they're still worshipping God.

They're still worshipping God, but they're just going to do it a little bit different way. They're going to do they're going to rebel against them in a way that where they can still quote worship and still be religious and on all those things. But an atheist is actually in just rebellion.

Like there's no attempt to this this separation that we have from God. They're not trying to paper over that in any way. They're not trying to assuage that.

They're not trying to. It's a bad face. They're trying to make that easier.

So all there is is this naked hatred, this naked rebellion. And we are all reminders of that. And I don't think they're, this is what they're thinking or this is what they'll tell you.

But if the Christian worldview is true, then this is part of what's going on. And yes, they do hate God. In fact, if you look at any debate, I mean, most everyone that I've seen between Christians and atheists, it will always land, they'll always land on God being bad.

God's character, it always moves to that pretty quickly, because that is their biggest problem. They do not like God. And they're very adamant about that.

So those are my thoughts on that back to there is no God and I hate him, you know, kind of thing. I think that comes from Frank Turk, by the way. But it is a, we don't want to be dismissive and just in a sense call names.

But as Lewis has pointed out, first you have to show that a person is wrong before it's meaningful to ask why he's wrong. Okay. We're asking why these attitudes.

And we've already made our case that they're mistaken. So then what else is going on here? And I think that some of the things we talked about are fair guesses. But the best thing to do is ask, why are you so angry? See what they say.

Let's go into a question from Clark George Clark. How does one reconcile God's sovereignty and Satan being the prince of this world? Well, notice he is a prince. He's not the king.

He is in a sense has a position of responsibility, maybe or a position of authority. Let's put it that way, but it's limited. And it is, it is what God is allowing to happen for his purposes.

Okay, I've actually never had trouble with this. When you think about, I mean, just to use a simple example, when you think of a Pontius pilot, Pontius pilot was a prefect over Judea. And he had absolute authority, unless, unless the emperor said differently.

So he has delegated a level or whatever, even though that authority was an ultimate. In our situation, God's authority is ultimate. He has allowed the devil to do certain things and to accomplish certain ends in the shorter term, because God's got a longer term plan that is that for which, and that means there's a morally sufficient reason for him to allow Satan the latitude that he's had.

And it's there's a lot of latitude. I mean, he's the prince of the power of the air. He has blinded the minds of the unbelievers.

He has the whole world lies in the power of evil of the evil one. They are held captive by him to do his will. He is the deceiver.

And by the way, I just noticed that goes all the way back. I mean, you can follow not back, but you followed forward all the way to the, to the great white throne judgment. And he's still called the deceiver.

And that's when the deceiver is put to an end. So there is deception that's allowed to happen. God gives the latitude there for his own reasons.

But that doesn't mean that God's not in control. I mean, we see this playing out in Job where God obviously had a purpose for allowing this, but Satan is saying, well, let me go do this. And God says, okay, but he's still in control of what's happening.

The same is true. Look at the death of Christ. Obviously, Satan thought he was scoring some big points there, but in actuality, he was doing something God wanted to use for a good purpose.

So no matter what he does, he's not acting outside of God's sovereignty. And also say that being the, the, the prince of this world does not mean that he's in control. It just means that we have given him our allegiance.

So he's, he's under, he's still under God's sovereignty. So perhaps George is asking, why is God allowing him so much latitude? But we have talked about the problem of evil a lot

in the past. So I'm going to direct George back there for that.

And then we're going to squeeze one more question in here. This one comes from Adam. Hello, Greg and Amy.

I once heard Norm Macdonald ask something like, why in the Lord's prayer, does it say lead us not into temptation? How can God lead us into temptation when that's not a part of his nature? Why is that something we pray? Right. I, I, that's so interesting because I, I big thinking about that the last couple of days. And what I, what I, I have read some things about this, but I cannot remember the exact ways how, well, I can remember the general explanation, but it's kind of a, a figure of speech in reverse.

It's like, I'm trying to think of a good illustration of this. So a guy gets married or a woman gets married to the guy and he's pledging his life and she says, don't ever leave me. Don't ever leave me.

And what she's expressing there is her desire to be close, not that she's expecting that her, her betrothed now is going to be leaving her, you know. So there are, there are times when sometimes we express desires and intentions by saying something that's almost off kilter or opposite, lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from the evil one. And so there's a parallel, actually, literally it is deliver me from the evil could be from evil.

It could be from the devil. I actually pray it both ways. I was praying it this morning.

And the, and so, so when you have that parallelism there, there are contrast. And so he says, don't lead us into temptation, but deliver, rather deliver me from the evil. Sweetheart, don't ever leave me.

Stay with me the will or the intention of the beloved to leave, but rather it's a way of manifesting the strength of the appeal. Stay with me forever. And I think the same thing as you here.

I think that's a great answer, Greg, and I have nothing to add. All right. Thank you so much, Blair, George, and Adam.

We love hearing from you. Send us your question on X with the hashtag strask or at our website at str.org. This is Amy Hall and Greg Coco for Stand to Reason.