

Reformed Doctrine of Predestination, Lesson # 31  
Objections to the Doctrine of Predestination - It Makes God the Author of Sin

**WCF 3.1.** God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

### I. The Problem of Evil

*The objection may be raised that if God has foreordained the entire course of events in this world He must be the Author of Sin. To begin with, we readily admit that the existence of sin in a universe which is under the control of a God who is infinite in His wisdom, power, holiness, and justice, is an inscrutable mystery which we in our present state of knowledge cannot fully explain. As yet we only see through a glass darkly. Sin can never be explained on the grounds of logic or reason, for it is essentially illogical and unreasonable. The mere fact that sin exists has often been urged by atheists and skeptics as an argument not merely against Calvinism but against theism in general.*

**WCF 5.4.** The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in his providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering, and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.

**James 1:13** Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

**1 John 1:5** This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

**1 John 2:16** For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

*A partial explanation of sin is found in the fact that while man is constantly commanded in Scripture not to commit it, he is, nevertheless, permitted to commit it if he chooses to do so. No compulsion is laid on the person; he is simply left to the free exercise of his own nature, and he alone is responsible. This, however, is never a bare permission, for with full knowledge of the nature of the person and of his tendency to sin, God allows him or allows him to be in a certain environment, knowing perfectly well that the particular sin will be committed. But while God permits sin, His connection with it is purely negative and it is the abominable thing which he hates with perfect hatred. The motive which God has in permitting it and the motive which man has in committing it are radically different. Many persons are deceived in these matters because they fail to consider that God wills righteously those things which men do wickedly. Furthermore, every person's conscience after he has committed a sin tells him that he alone is responsible and that he need not have committed it if he had not voluntarily chosen to do so.*

*The Reformers recognized the fact that sin, both in its entrance into the world and in all its subsequent appearances, was involved in the divine plan; that the explanation of its existence, so far as any explanation could be given, was to be found in the fact that sin was completely under the control of God; and that it would be overruled for a higher manifestation of His glory. We may rest assured that God would never have permitted sin to have entered at all unless, through His secret and overruling providence, He was able to exert a directing influence on the minds of wicked men so that good is made to result from their intended evil. He works not only all the good and holy affections which are found in the hearts of His people, but He also perfectly controls all the depraved and impious affections of the wicked, and turns them as He pleases, so that they have a desire to accomplish that which He has planned to accomplish by their means. The wicked so often glory in themselves at some accomplishment of their purposes; but as*

*Calvin says, "the event at length proves that they were only fulfilling all the while that which had been ordained of God, and that too, against their own will, while they knew nothing of it." But while God does overrule the depraved affections of men for the accomplishment of His own purposes, He nevertheless punishes them for their sin and makes them to stand condemned in their own consciences.*

## **II. Instances in which Sin has been Overruled for Good**

### **A. Examples from Scripture**

- Pharaoh and the Egyptians were permitted to wrong the Israelites, that by their deliverance God's wonders might be multiplied in the land of Egypt (Ex. 11:9), that these things might be told to future generations (Ex. 10:1, 2), and that His glory might be declared throughout all the earth (Ex. 9:16).
- The calamities which befell Job, as seen from the human viewpoint appear to be mere misfortunes, accidents, chance happenings. But with further knowledge we see God behind it all, exercising complete control, giving the Devil permission to afflict so far but no farther, designing the events for the development of Job's patience and character, and using even the seemingly meaningless waste of the storm to fulfill His high and loving purposes.
- The death of Lazarus, as seen from the human viewpoint of Mary and Martha and those who came to mourn for him, was a very great misfortune; but when seen from the divine viewpoint it was "not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby," (John 11)
- Paul, by his stern rebukes, made the Corinthians "sorry unto repentance," (2 Cor. 7:9,10)  
"Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. 10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death."
- The Lord often temporarily delivers a person over to Satan, that his bodily and mental sufferings may react for his salvation, (1 Cor. 5:5) "...deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

*To a certain extent we can say that the reason for the permission of sin is that, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Such deep, unfathomable grace could not have been shown if sin had been excluded.*

*But, God, who once commanded light to shine out of darkness, can marvelously bring, if He pleases, salvation out of hell itself, and thus turn darkness itself to light. But what worketh Satan? In a certain sense, the work of God! That is, God, by holding Satan fast bound in obedience to His Providence, turns him whithersoever He will, and thus applies the great enemy's devices and attempts to the accomplishment of His own eternal principles. - Calvin*

### **B. Persecution Overruled for God's good**

- Paul declares that "our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory," (2 Cor. 4:17).
- To suffer with Christ is to be more closely united to Him, and great reward in heaven is promised to those who suffer in His behalf (Matt. 5:10-12).
- "The acts of the wicked in persecuting the early Church were ordained of God as the means for the wider and more speedy proclamation of the Gospel. The sufferings of the martyrs were the means not only of extending but of purifying the Church." - Charles Hodge

*Many of the divine attributes were displayed through the creation and government of the world, but the attribute of justice could be shown only to creatures deserving punishment, and the attribute of mercy or grace could be shown only to creatures in misery. Until man's fall into sin, and redemption from it, these attributes, so far as we can learn, had been unexercised and undisplayed, and consequently were unknown to any but God Himself from all eternity. Had not sin been admitted to the creation these attributes would have remained buried in an eternal night. And the universe, without the knowledge of these attributes, would be like the earth without the light of the sun. Sin, then, is permitted in order that the mercy of God may be shown in its forgiveness, and that His justice may be shown in its punishment. Its entrance is the result of a settled design which God formed in eternity, and through which He purposed to reveal Himself to His rational creatures as complete and full-orbed in all conceivable perfections.*