

God Is In Control - of What?

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | September 6, 2019



Recently, a person in an online forum asked me:

Would you personally mention — after all of the conflict, discord, crime, [church] focus on eschatology paranoia — that “God is in control” to any audience?

In response, some other forum members took up the question of whether “God is in control” — and how suggesting such a thing to a person who is a victim of a crime or some kind of exploitation can be upsetting; having been told in the aftermath of rape or incest that “God is control,” some victims have rejected God.

So is God in control? And if so, of what?

The key to understanding the saying “God is in control,” as well as essentially all theological questions, is how one understands God’s law. If one views God’s law functioning like the laws that humans make up — imposed rules requiring the ruling authority to impose punishments — then people view God as making everything happen, which inevitably leads them to form wrong theology. A variety of different errors are formed, such as the teaching that when tragedies occur, it is God who is bringing the pain —

such as God controlling the molester who abuses people, or God directing the hurricanes, earthquakes, or God hardening the hearts of certain people.

Some who reject a punishing God, but don't reject the imposed-law view, embrace and promote Universalism. They teach that because God is love, wants all to be saved, and is ultimately in control, all will be saved in the end. Like the error before, this one also stems from the lie that God is imposing His imperialistic will to maintain "justice" within His government by enforcing His law.

One's level of spiritual maturity — the level through which one comprehends right and wrong — plays into this. See my blog on the [seven levels of moral development](#) for a full explanation of these different levels. But briefly, levels one through four are immature levels; in each of these, right and wrong is in some way determined by performance and the individual seeks security in rule keeping of some kind. Those operating at one of these levels find safety in the belief that God controls everything, so they don't fear getting into trouble as long as they follow the right rules. But this invariably fails as a rational belief, because history is replete with bad things happening to good people, and the book of Job makes it explicitly clear that such bad things are not God's doing.

The Reality of God's Control

The truth is realized when we accept that God is Creator and His laws are the protocols upon which reality is built to operate, such as the laws of physics, law of love, truth, worship, liberty, exertion, laws of health, the moral laws, and so many more. It is how reality works. See my [blog on design laws](#) for a fuller exploration of the various design laws.

Thus, God is in control of what God controls — and God controls Himself and all His laws. He sustains reality; He keeps the universe running upon the protocols and laws He established. And one of those laws is the law of liberty, which grants real freedom to sentient beings. Why? Because love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom.

This is how God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 4:21; 7:3) *yet* Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:15, 32). How did God harden Pharaoh's heart? By presenting the truth and leaving Pharaoh free to accept or reject it. The accepting or rejecting causes the end result — healing or hardening. The act of choosing to accept or reject truth; to embrace love or embrace selfishness; to steal, lie, cheat, or be honest, truthful and loyal, changes the person who makes the choice. Without the truth presented and the freedom to reject it, Pharaoh's heart would not have become as hardened. Thus, God hardened Pharaoh's heart through the laws of truth and freedom; He presented truth and left the ruler free. God controlled His laws, but Pharaoh exercised his own will and controlled his own choice, and in choosing to reject the truth, he hardened his own heart. This is how reality works and how God is in control.

So the next time you hear "God is in control," think, "In control of what?" — and remember that God is in control of Himself and the laws upon which reality is built to operate. That means we have real freedom, because only in such freedom does love exist. If God made us all robots we would behave perfectly, but there would be no love. God only wins His cause by utilizing His methods — truth, love, and freedom. That's why the Bible says, "Not by might, nor by power but by the Spirit says the Lord" (Zechariah 4:6).

You can trust God to cleanse the world of fear, selfishness, sin, disease, pain, suffering, and death — to return the earth to perfection and eternal security. And He achieves this via the exercise of truth, love, and freedom. God, in control of Himself and His laws, including the law of liberty, means He will never

control us. This is why the last fruit of the Spirit, when the Spirit finishes His healing work in our lives, is “self-control” (Galatians 5:23). God sets us completely free to govern and control ourselves, because He has restored His law in our hearts and minds and we again function upon the laws He constructed reality to operate.

I invite you to surrender yourselves to our Creator — not to become a puppet that He controls, but to become a subject whom He heals and sets free to live in harmony with His character of love.