

Acts Intermission II

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[0 : 00] Well, I was going to continue on with what we are considering in Acts chapter 9, and I just decided that we would take a brief detour this morning and talk about something else in light of one of these articles that we distributed and a conversation that Frank Anderson and I were having before the rest of you got here.

And it has to do with if there is a righteous and a sovereign God, how do we account for the existence of evil in the world and so much adversity?

And then it was prompted further by the article that we distributed by Charles Krauthammer called *The Killer, the Weapon, and the Cultural Climate*. How can you possibly explain, how can you possibly justify, how can you possibly square the existence of a God who is all-powerful and supposedly all-love, how can you square that with the existence of evil and the Columbine shootings that occurred years ago in Colorado and the Connecticut shootings that occurred just a couple of weeks ago here in the Northeast where utterly innocent people are just massacred, gunned down by somebody who either is so filled with hatred and animosity or is mentally unbalanced and not in his right mind.

And God seemingly stands by and allows these kind of things to happen. How can you possibly square that with what the Bible describes as a God who is all-powerful and all-loving?

This dilemma has been presented by philosophers and theologians for hundreds of years. Some of the Catholic great theologians like Anselm and St. Thomas Aquinas struggled with these as did Augustine before them and Martin Luther and John Calvin and all the rest trying to square these issues.

[2 : 24] How can we possibly account for this? And it seems as though it is insuperable in that we supposedly have a God who has all power at His disposal.

He can do anything that He wants to do. And He is supposedly all-good so that He is all-loving. And the conundrum is posed this way.

Either God is all-good but not all-powerful, so even though He has a desire to fix things and to prevent things that would hurt man, He doesn't have the ability to do so.

Or you can say that God does have the ability and the power to address every human predicament and make the pain and the heartache go away and fix things and prevent things like Columbine and prevent things like tidal waves and tsunamis and hurricanes.

But He doesn't care enough to do it. So He's not all-good. And theologians and philosophers have been asked the question because the idea is you cannot have it both ways.

[3 : 37] So how do we account for that? And my answer, and I think the biblical answer, is in a way very simple and very profound.

This is the issue that Randy Alcorn opened when he penned his book, which, by the way, I would heartily recommend to anybody who wants to seriously pursue this.

And it's a rather thick volume, but it is an excellent read, and it is well worth it for anybody that will give the time and attention to it. And it's simply called, *If God is good, then how do you account for all of these things?*

And men all over the world have been asking these questions, and for some that is a major sticking point to their embracing the God of the Bible because they see what is supposedly the power and the caring of this God of the Bible, and yet everywhere you look, you see human misery and crime and all kinds of adversity and death, disease, cancer, insufferable pain.

Do you realize how many people there are who live in constant pain 24-7? And it makes our little aches and pains seem minor in comparison to what they are dealing with.

[5 : 08] So how can we account for these things? And I think there is but one solution, and it's the only thing that I've been able to arrive at, and to me it makes a great deal of sense, and it is found in the one word that I have come to appreciate so very much and have made so much of, and that is this.

It is the word volition. Volition. It all has to do with the nature of these creatures that God has created.

When God created our first parents, Adam and Eve, even before them, when God created the angels, we don't know how much earlier before humans God created angels, but we know they were on the scene before man was created.

And the scriptures make it quite clear that Lucifer, who is described as the son of the morning, was apparently the greatest and the wisest and the most glorious of all of the beings that God created, and he rebelled against God.

Not only that, but he succeeded in recruiting a third of the angels that God created to follow him. And the question could very well legitimately be posed, God knowing what Lucifer was going to do, why did he create him?

[6 : 44] Or why did he create him that way? And God knew the choice that Adam and Eve were going to make. Yet he told them, and he warned them ahead of time, of all the trees of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou wilt surely die.

And all the while God was telling them that, he knew exactly what they were going to do. So why did he create them that way? It's a very good question.

And it comes back to the same answer. It is volition. God gave Lucifer and other angels, and God gave our first parents a will.

He gave them the ability to make choices. And this is where free moral agency finds its roots. It is God giving man the capacity, not the necessity, the capacity to obey him.

And with that comes the capacity to disobey. Only a willful creature, such as we are, and such as angels are, only a willful creature can render a willing obedience, or disobedience.

[8 : 16] So, we might say, and I don't like this term, but I use it for the purpose of trying to express myself, because it isn't an accurate term at all.

But from a human standpoint, it looks on the surface as if God was taking a chance, God was risking it.

And you might be able to embrace that kind of a position if you also embrace what is known as the openness, or the open theology, which means that God doesn't know the future any more than you do.

He has to wait until something happens before he can address it. And this, by the way, is created quite a stir among current theologians, and there are a number of people that buy into this.

That God doesn't know what's going to happen until it happens. But the scriptures give the lie to that, because he calls things that are not as though they were.

[9 : 16] He knows the end from the beginning, and the beginning from the end. And on the basis of God's complete omniscience, rests the whole idea of biblical prophecy, because God does know exactly what's going to happen, and he is never taken by surprise.

And God, ultimately, has never taken a risk, because when you take a risk, you enter into a situation where you do not know the outcome, and yet you might consider it an acceptable risk, because it is worth taking the risk, because the payoff, if it comes the way you want it, would be true.

It's almost like, it's the same situation as a football coach. Third down, one yard to go, and the tendency is, do you kick the football, or do you go for the first down?

There is a risk involved. And depending on what the score is, and depending on how much time there is left in the game, all of those things come into the play, as to the decision he's going to make.

But he knows whatever decision he makes, it's going to be a risk. There's a risk if you kick the ball, there's a risk if you go for the first down. And he doesn't know how it's going to turn out. So that's the idea of a risk.

[10 : 35] But God, who is the sovereign Lord, has never taken a risk, because he knows exactly what the outcome is going to be. And yet, he has given man, this thing, and angels, this thing called

volition.

Now, what choice did he have? I can only think of two. When it comes to creating a moral agent, such as angels, and men.

And by a moral agent, I mean someone who has and understands the difference between right and wrong, and good and evil. Their perspective allows them to identify those things, and they know the difference between good and bad.

And they are able to make choices. This is where the whole idea of morality comes in. And when God created, the choices he had was to create angels and men without the ability to do wrong. Without the ability to disobey. And that would have no doubt created a much more tranquil universe. Because nobody, angels or men, would have stepped out of line.

[11:57] Everybody would have been programmed to do the right thing. Thus, there would be no sin, there would be no death, there would be no disease, everything would be idyllic.

Man would not enter into evil because he wouldn't have the ability to do it. He is programmed to do only the right thing.

So, let's examine obedience in that realm. Is there any virtue in an obedience that is given for instance as a child to a parent?

Is there any virtue in a child obeying a parent because he has no alternative? That's the only thing he can do.

He can't disobey because it isn't within him to disobey. Is an unwilling obedience worth anything?

[13:06] Is an obedience that you have to render because you can't disobey, is that kind of obedience worth anything? It is only, it seems to me, a voluntary obedience that has any virtue or worthiness to it.

And if that one doesn't grab you, how about this one? How about love? Love love is an act of the will.

Love is not a feeling. It may be accompanied by feelings, but love is not a feeling. It is an act of the will. Love is not emotional.

It is often accompanied by emotion, and we enjoy the feelings and the emotions that surround love, but love itself is a voluntary thing.

It is an act of the will. In the Ten Commandments, we are told, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, and soul.

[14:12] And man is commanded to love God only because he has the ability to respond to that. He has the ability to love God. He also has the ability to not love God.

And one of the commandments makes it quite clear that loving God is an act of the will, and God knows that you can love Him, so He is actually demanding, if you will, our love.

But, you don't have to give it. You can tell God to bug off. You can tell God drop dead. If He could.

You can tell God you don't want anything to do with Him. You can exercise your will that way. And if you do, then you are completely in disobedience. But you have the ability to do that.

You are a free moral agent. Who wants to be loved? Because the one loving you has no choice but to love you.

[15:13] Do you want your wife to love you because she is programmed to love you? She can't do anything else. Is there any virtue or value in that kind of love?

I submit that there is not. It is only a love that is rendered of one's free moral agency, of one's own will.

I choose to love you because I want to love you. I will to love you. It isn't because I have to love you because I don't.

But I choose to. Now if this is true among us mortals, and it certainly is, can we transfer this concept to the Almighty?

Do you think that God wants you to love Him because you have no choice but to love Him? You have to love Him. you are made in such a way that you have to love Him?

[16:16] No. God doesn't want that kind of love. He wants you to love Him because you choose to, because you want to, because you will to. This is the thing that volition brings about.

And when God bestowed the ability to make free moral choices upon our parents, He knew full well exactly what they were going to do.

Then, why did He do that? Why did He make them that way? If He didn't give them volition, then the only other alternative is, as I've already suggested and talked about, He had to have programmed

them in such a way that they could not rebel against Him, that they would always have to do the right thing.

Then you're talking about puppetry. This is a robot. This is a, you might as well be a mindless individual because any time you are confronted with a decision, you automatically make the right decision because you were programmed to do so.

In other words, God overrides any will that you might have and replaces it with an automatic will so that you're an automatic pilot, if you will, and you always do the right thing.

[17 : 33] Now, I cannot think of another alternative. alternative. Either He creates us with volition as free moral agents, realizing that there can be negative outcomes and adversity from that, or He creates us as automatons and robots with no ability to kick over the traces and go our own way.

I cannot think of a third alternative. Now, that means that Lucifer and humans were given the option of obeying or disobeying, of yielding or not yielding, of going their own way or going God's way. And when Adam and Eve were told, in the day that you eat thereof you will surely die, they ate. And because the scriptures make it very clear, there are two kinds of death.

Adam and Eve did not fall over dead like you would if you ate something that was poisonous to your body, so that strychnine or arsenic, so that when you eat it you fall over dead and you become a corpse.

Because Adam lived to be 930 years old. And those by the way are real years, but years that were lived under entirely different environmental circumstances, etc. So, what did God mean when he said in the day that you eat you will die?

[19 : 09] And what he meant was this, there are two ways of death because God created man physically and he created him spiritually. He created a body, this was this massive lump of clay that God fashioned from the dust of the earth, and that was Adam's physical body just like our bodies, two arms, two legs, a head, etc.

And then we are told that God breathed into Adam the breath of life. He breathed into his nostrils. And God didn't do this for anything else that he created.

There's nothing in scripture that says God breathed into the nostrils of a dog or a horse or a cow. But he breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of life.

And Adam became a living soul. God animated him. He brought this lifeless body into existence.

And he rose up and was able to walk and talk and move. He was a living human being. He breathed a spirit into him that animated him.

[20 : 26] And this is what James meant when he said the body without the spirit is dead. This is what Jesus Christ was referring to when he was on the cross.

And of the seven last words that he said, one of them was Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit. And he gave up his spirit.

He yielded it up. And nobody saw his spirit leave from him. But it did. It was the life principle that was inside the physical body of Jesus Christ.

And when he died, the spirit leaves the body. And when Stephen was being stoned to death under that hail of stones, he cried out, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

And nobody standing there throwing those stones looked at Stephen and said, hey, looky there. Look, isn't that amazing? There goes his spirit. It's leaving his body. No, no, no, no.

[21 : 35] Nobody ever sees the spirit because the human spirit is intangible. It is not physical. It is not observable.

You cannot analyze the human spirit in a scientific laboratory. You can't weigh it. You can't measure it because it's immaterial. And we're told God is spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

So, Adam had this spirit and he said, in the day that you eat, you will die. And that meant you will spiritually die.

When he ate, physical death began. But it was going to take a long time for it to be realized. But spiritual death was immediate.

And death is always separation. It is not a ceasing to exist. That is not what death means. Death does not mean you don't exist anymore.

[22 : 38] death means you are separated. You are disintegrated. You are torn apart. And what it is that is torn apart of your personhood is your spirit is taken from you in death leaving behind a lifeless body.

A body that is no longer able to respond to stimuli. The body is dead. The spirit does not die. The human spirit is indestructible.

That is the part of our being that is absent from the body and present with the Lord when we die physically.

But the key that I want to emphasize is separation. So when Adam and Eve sinned in rebellion against God they became separated from God.

Alienated from God. Apparently they were accustomed to fellowship with him in the garden. And we are told that God came seeking for Adam and said Adam where are you?

[23 : 48] Where are you? And they were hiding. And he said we heard your voice in the garden and we hid because we were afraid.

You see what happens because we have this thing called volition and a human spirit there also resides within us that moral capacity and the knowledge and understanding that when we have done something wrong that we have been told not to do we know we have disobeyed and what sets in immediately upon that disobedience is this thing called guilt.

guilt is produced by the violation of a known standard. We know we have stepped over the line.

We know we have disobeyed. We know we are guilty. And guilt produces fear.

Fear of disclosure that somebody will find out and fear of punishment that is going to come. So we hide.

[25 : 07] We try to cover it up. That's exactly what Adam and Eve were doing. They tried to cover it up and they've got this ridiculous fig leaf thing. We hid because we were naked and God says, that's amazing.

You were always naked but your nakedness didn't bother you before and now that the guilt is set in, now you are aware that you are naked and I wish I could get a handle on this guys.

I really do. And maybe someday I'll get some breakthrough on it but I haven't had it to this point.

There is something in connection with our private parts and human guilt that I don't have a handle on.

But let me put it this way. It is really significant that man is the only one of all of God's creatures that sees the need to wear clothing.

You never see animals running around clothed. They're all naked. Just the way they were born. But we put clothes on ourselves and we become very conscious of our private parts and we want to cover them up because we are embarrassed to be seen naked.

[26 : 26] And that is all wrapped up somehow with this guilt and sin thing that I just don't understand. But maybe someday we will. So they hid because they were afraid.

And they were guilty. And what happened was the fellowship and the connection that Adam and Eve had with God before they disobeyed was ruptured.

It all came to a screeching halt. Before they had communion and fellowship with him. Now they hide from him. That's what separation means. It means you no longer want to be with this person because of guilt.

So you separate yourself from them. And that was their spiritual death. They died when they ate of that tree. Just like God said, they died spiritually. And the consequence of that spiritual death was separation.

No longer familiarity. No longer fellowship. No longer closeness. But that's broken. And that's why they hid. Because they were afraid. So that's the consequence.

[27 : 34] And God said, when and if you eat of that tree, you will surely die spiritually. They took upon themselves. And guys, this is really, really important.

Adam and Eve took upon themselves something that God did not create and put within them. It was a foreign element that did not belong there.

And what it was, was sin. And sin always produces consequences.

And there are always bad consequences. sin is a terrible taskmaster. And the scriptures describe humanity as being sold under sin.

And fellas, this is why Christ came. This is why he died. It was to address this negative element. It was to bring man out from the consequences of sin into forgiveness and freedom.

[28 : 50] That's why Christ died on that cross. That's what the manger of Bethlehem is all about. Because he was on his way to the cross. And on that cross, he was going to pay for the sins of the world.

God and when Adam and Eve took upon them this new nature, this sinful thing that God didn't put there, it caused all of creation to be reduced to a havoc that it did not have before.

That Adam was the federal head of all of creation. And God put Adam in charge of everything. He said, subdue the earth, replenish it.

You are the master of the earth. And when Adam and Eve sinned, they forfeited that lordship they had over the earth.

And as a result, the earth no longer cooperates with man. The earth has been made, the earth, the environment has been forced to partake of Adam's sin and Adam's consequences.

[30 : 06] And this is why you have the elements of the world out of control. This is why you have floods, this is why you have earthquakes, this is why you have tsunamis.

All of these things are a result of that. It's all part of the same package. And it is man's sin, and rebellion that has brought all of this chaos upon us.

So, it is not accurate to say that this present world is the world that God created. No, it isn't. This present world is the world that man's sin has remade from the world that God created.

Because when God created after the sixth day, we're told in Genesis, he was able to stand back and look at the world and everything in it and pronounce it very good.

Do you think he could say that about the world today? Not hardly. So, even though God often gets the blame, where was God in Columbine?

[31 : 19] Where was God in Connecticut? Where was God when this happened? Where was God when that happened? all of these happenings, all of these negative events that produce so much pain and heartache and death and disease and all the rest, this is man's doing.

This is not God's doing. This is man's doing. We have brought this upon ourselves and we are suffering the consequences of it and that's why Christ came to address that. Jim?

Mark, if a child is born, all be formed in all, is that the result? No. Absolutely. Absolutely. It is the result of sin.

I want to be very careful here because this is easily misunderstood. It is not necessarily the result of personal sin, although it may be.

It may be. It may be that a baby is born with FAS, fetal alcohol syndrome, and the baby is going to struggle with that for all of its life and it produces mental abnormalities and everything else.

[32 : 26] We have tens of thousands of cases of this. Fetal alcohol syndrome where the mother, while she was carrying that baby, engaged in imbibing alcohol to the extent that it affected the fetus and it was born defective.

So that is her own personal negative contribution to that situation. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. My other question is, I always thought, like the Calamino one of them, at the time the person does all that, they're insane.

Is that true? Well, they may be. Sometimes we can't say. That's true. That's true.

If there is a mental imbalance there, if somebody is simply insane, and by being insane, I think the only justifiable definition of somebody who is insane is an individual who is not in touch with reality, and they really do not know the difference between good and evil.

[33 : 41] They do not have the ability to make the right choice. That, to me, is the only definition that's acceptable of insanity. The vast majority of people who are dismissed as insane are not.

They did what they chose to do because they wanted to do it. And very often, the plea on their defense is a plea of insanity because we have a tendency to say, well, nobody in their right mind would do something like that.

So, he has to be insane, but not necessarily because, fellas, evil has an incredible capacity to operate. And evil sometimes comes to the fore out of one's own free will who does not have to do that evil, but he chooses to do it.

Roger? A couple, three years ago, you were talking about the mass murderers, and in the old days, you said that the guys didn't kill themselves in the woman.

But today, they kill themselves in the end of their terrible ass. Yeah. Yeah. Many times. You have an explanation for that. Many times. I think part of it is because they have bought into the idea of naturalism or empiricism.

[34 : 57] They believe that this life and this world is all there is and that there is nothing beyond.

So, this could be an impetus for someone to take their own life because all they can think of is that they are going to opt out of everything and that they are just going to cease to exist anywhere, in

any way, shape, or form.

And the only way that you can buy into that is if you deny the reality of the spiritual which is indestructible. If you believe that you are just a body and that's all you are, so that when you die, you die like a dog and that's the end of it.

There is no hereafter. If your pain is great enough or if your resentment and bitterness and hatred is great enough, you may take your own life. And a lot of suicides are done out of anger.

A lot of suicides are done to get even with somebody. And it is often somebody whom they view caused them this pain and they say, I'll show you, you are going to have to live with this for the rest of your life.

You made me take my life. You made me kill myself. Now, live with that if you will. That's the basis for a lot of suicide. And of course, a lot of suicide is just mentally unbalanced people and they simply don't know, they don't understand what they're doing.

[36 : 16] But that's one of the reasons for. I want to leave you with this verse because this is the only thing that makes sense. Please go ahead and eat before your food gets cold. There's a verse that I think gives the only explanation to all of this and it is found in Revelation 4 and I think it's about verse 11 or 12.

And we are told that the four and twenty elders bow down before him who sits on the throne who lives forever and they say, Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and wisdom and power for or because thou has created all things and by thy pleasure they were and are created. So why did God create anything and why did he create things as he did? The answer is it pleased him to do so. That's it.

It pleased him to do so. Knowing full well the course that all of these things were going to take and also knowing full well the remedy that he would provide through Jesus Christ.

God created as he did because he chose to. Knowing full well what the outcome would be. And fellas, I want to leave you with this thought because to me this is enormously encouraging. In the end game, in the final analysis, when everything is wrapped up and the last war has been fought and Armageddon is over and the judgment has happened and the sheep have been separated from the goats and it all comes down to the final thing, God is going to be able to say, it all turned out just like I planned.

[37 : 53] That is amazing. Only a sovereign God can do that. Only a sovereign God can give man and angels volition and the power to make choices and still have the end game be what he wants it to make.

That calls for a very big God and that's what we have.