

2012 Conference of the  
Berean PRC

# IS GOD SOVEREIGN OVER EVILS?

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# Introduction:

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- 1) Evils are a reality in the lives of believers. **Psalm 34:19.**
  - 2) The ungodly also suffer affliction, but the child of God suffers more than the wicked do. **Psalm 73.**
  - 3) Times of suffering produce many questions, including this: "***Where do these evils come from? Who sends them on me?***"
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# God's Sovereignty Over Evils

- I. The Opposing Viewpoint
- II. The Truth Regarding Sovereignty
- III. The Significance Of This Truth

# I. The Opposing Viewpoint

# I. THE OPPOSING VIEWPOINT



- Where do evils come from?
  - Some say: “Chance!”
  - Other say: “Laws of Nature!”
  - Most say: “The Devil!”

# I. THE OPPOSING VIEWPOINT



- The prevailing notion in the church world today is that evils come from the Devil.
- **Their viewpoint?**
  - ✦ God sends all the good things
  - ✦ The devil is the source of all evils
  - ✦ God is not sovereign over the evils

# I. THE OPPOSING VIEWPOINT



- The prevailing notion in the church world today is that evils come from the Devil.
- **Their explanation?**
  - ✦ Dualism: God & Satan are two distinct powers
  - ✦ The devil surprises God, and ruins God's plans
  - ✦ But God can make good come out of the bad
  - ✦ God is like a master chess player – He will win!

# I. THE OPPOSING VIEWPOINT



- The prevailing notion in the church world today is that evils come from the Devil.
- **Their basis/support?**
  - ✦ “God is a God of love!”
  - ✦ Why would a God Who loves us send evils upon us?
  - ✦ A loving God sends only good things – all evils are from the devil



# I. THE OPPOSING VIEWPOINT



- What is our Response to this?
  1. This is unbiblical
  2. This denies that God is the only God
    - a. It is impossible to have 2 who are almighty, 2 who are in control, 2 who are sovereign
    - b. Prof. D. Engelsma – page 39 of “Prosperous Wicked and Plagued Saints”

# I. THE OPPOSING VIEWPOINT



*“Those Reformed philosophers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century who attempt to solve the problem of evils in human life by denying God’s sovereign government of evils, not only fail to solve the problem of evils but also create the additional, enormous problem of a god who is not God. If God is not sovereign over evils, he is not God. A god who is powerless over evils is not the God made known in the Bible, particularly in the Psalms. ... Denial of God’s sovereignty over the evils in human life certainly rules out the possibility of ever viewing these evils as divine blessings with a good outcome, which is the comfort finally afforded the psalmist in Psalm 73.” (Engelsma)*

# I. THE OPPOSING VIEWPOINT



- What is our Response to this?
  1. This is unbiblical
  2. This denies that God is the only God
  3. This denies the holiness of God
    - a. Why does God send evils upon man? God is a holy God Who hates and punishes sin.
    - b. If the devil sends evils, then those evils are not judgments of God and His holiness is denied.
  - 4.

# I. THE OPPOSING VIEWPOINT



- What is our Response to this?
  1. This is unbiblical
  2. This denies that God is the only God
  3. This denies the holiness of God
  4. This leaves God's people without comfort
    - a. You must say to the afflicted believer: *"You are now in the hands of the devil!"*
    - b. That will lead God's people to despair – also regarding their salvation
    - c. Prof. Hanko, *Letters to a Young Believer*, p. 57

# I. THE OPPOSING VIEWPOINT



*“There are not two sovereigns in the world, God and Satan. There are not two independent powers in the world, God and the devil. How could that be? The devil is a creature. God is the Creator. Not one action of the devil, not even when he had Christ crucified, is independent of God’s control and plan. Thank God for that. If the devil were in some measure independent, we could never be sure who would win in the end and our salvation would hang undetermined on the thread of the devil’s sovereignty. ... We must at all costs hold on to God’s sovereignty.” (Hanko)*

# II. The Truth Regarding Sovereignty

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## II. THE TRUTH REGARDING SOVEREIGNTY

- Where do evils come from?
  - What the Scriptures say:
    - **Exodus 8-12** – It was God Who sent the 10 plagues on Egypt
    - **Job 1:12** – “... the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away ...”
    - **Job 2:10** – “... What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?”
    - **Psalm 39:9** – “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it.”

## II. THE TRUTH REGARDING SOVEREIGNTY

- Where do evils come from?
  - What the Scriptures say:
    - **Psalm 46:8** – *“Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.”*
    - **Amos 3:6** – *“... Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?”*
    - **Isaiah 45:7** – *“I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.”*



## II. THE TRUTH REGARDING SOVEREIGNTY

- Where do evils come from?
  - What the Scriptures say:
  - What the Confessions say:
    - Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 10
    - Belgic Confession, Article 13
    - Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 5

## II. THE TRUTH REGARDING SOVEREIGNTY

- Where do evils come from?
  - What the Scriptures say:
  - What the Confessions say:
  - We confess: “God is absolutely sovereign!”
    - God does **what** He pleases, **when** He pleases, **how** He please, **to whom** He pleases.
    - God’s sovereignty is all-comprehensive – no limitations, no exceptions.
    - A. W. Pink, *The Sovereignty Of God*

## II. THE TRUTH REGARDING SOVEREIGNTY

*“Only two alternatives are possible: Either God governs, or He is governed; either God rules, or He is ruled; either God has His way, or men have theirs; either God accomplishes His own will, or He is thwarted by His creatures.” (Pink)*

## II. THE TRUTH REGARDING SOVEREIGNTY

- God is absolutely sovereign over evils!
- What is the devil's involvement in evils?
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## II. THE TRUTH REGARDING SOVEREIGNTY

- What is the devil's involvement in evils?
  - The Bible is clear that the devil is involved
  - But he is not an independent devil, with independent powers, acting independently, and doing what he wants
  - God controls Satan. God limits him. God uses him. **Job 1 & 2, Psalm 2, Revelation 20**
  - Quotes: .....

## II. THE TRUTH REGARDING SOVEREIGNTY

- Pink: *“Satan himself is absolutely subject to God’s control. When arraigned in Eden, he listened to the awful sentence but answered not a word. He was unable to touch Job until God granted him leave. So, too, he had to gain our Lord’s consent before he could ‘sift’ Peter. When Christ commanded him to depart – ‘Get thee hence, Satan’ – we read, ‘Then the devil leaveth Him’ (Matt. 4:11). And, in the end, he will be cast into the Lake of Fire which has been prepared for him and his angels.”*

## II. THE TRUTH REGARDING SOVEREIGNTY

- *“In all trials and afflictions man should first of all run to God; he should realize and accept the fact that everything is sent by God, whether it comes from the devil or from man.”* (Martin Luther)
- *“But God’s power is not simply greater than that of the devil. In His sovereign power God actually uses the devil so that in everything that he does he is accomplishing the purposes of God. God sends the devil; God uses the devil; the devil is God’s pawn and puppet.”* (Prof. R. Cammenga)

## II. THE TRUTH REGARDING SOVEREIGNTY

- God is absolutely sovereign over evils.
- God sovereignly controls the devil.
- Does this make God the Author of sin?
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## II. THE TRUTH REGARDING SOVEREIGNTY

- Does this make God the Author of sin?
  - Some raise this point in order to deny God's absolute sovereignty
  - A solution that is sometimes presented is to say that God "permits" sin.
  - The Proper solution: ....

## II. THE TRUTH REGARDING SOVEREIGNTY

- Does this make God the Author of sin?
  - The proper solution:
    - The Bible does not see this as a problem
    - Man sins willfully – he is not forced to sin
    - God always has a good purpose with sin
  - **Canons of Dordt, Head I, Art. 15 and Conclusion** – *“the Reformed churches not only do not acknowledge [that God is the author of sin], but even detest [this] with their whole soul.”*

# **III. The Significance Of This Truth**

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# III. THE SIGNIFICANCE

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## 1) We **Acknowledge** God

- ❖ Our confession is always: “God did it!”
- ❖ Not one thing is by chance or apart from God
- ❖ Not one thing comes from a powerful, independent devil

# III. THE SIGNIFICANCE

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- 1) We Acknowledge God
- 2) We **Submit** to God
  - ❖ Job 1:12 – Job knew he deserved evils
  - ❖ We sometimes struggle to submit because we think we should have a trouble free life
  - ❖ Submission means we say, “Thy will be done! Do to me what Thou has willed, for that will bring me to glory!” (Psalm 73:24)

# III. THE SIGNIFICANCE

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- 1) We Acknowledge God
- 2) We Submit to God
- 3) We Find **Comfort** in God
  - ❖ Whatever we experience, it comes from our sovereign God, and not a sovereign and independent devil.
  - ❖ God Who sends all these things is our Father Who loves us and does all for our good. (Romans 8:28, II Corinthians 4:15)
  - ❖ We can be sure all is well. We can be confident we are safe (now and always) in the hands of God. (John 10:27-29, Romans 8:35-39)

# Conclusion:

- ◆ Psalter # 383

*Ere into being I was brought  
Thy eye did see, and in Thy thought  
My life in all its perfect plan  
Was ordered ere my days began.*

- ◆ Psalter # 203

*Thy counsel through my earthly way  
Shall guide me and control,  
And then to glory afterward  
Thou wilt receive my soul.*