



## “Should We Question God’s Justice?”

### Lamentations 3:27-38

February 14, 2021

#### Lam 3:27-38

**27 It is good for a man that he should bear**

**The yoke in his youth.**

28 Let him sit alone and be silent

Since He has laid it on him.

29 Let him put his mouth in the dust,

Perhaps there is hope.

30 Let him give his cheek to the smiter,

Let him be filled with reproach.

31 For the Lord will not reject forever,

32 For if He causes grief,

Then He will have compassion

According to His abundant lovingkindness.

**27 It is good for a man that he should bear**

**The yoke in his youth.**

- Sin, and God’s punishment for it, is like a yoke around our necks.

- Learn to follow God when you are young, lest sin and its consequences are more difficult when you get older.

#### Lam 3:27-38

**27 It is good for a man that he should bear**

**The yoke in his youth.**

**28 Let him sit alone and be silent**

**Since He has laid it on him.**

29 Let him put his mouth in the dust,

Perhaps there is hope.

30 Let him give his cheek to the smiter,

Let him be filled with reproach.

31 For the Lord will not reject forever,

32 For if He causes grief,

Then He will have compassion

According to His abundant lovingkindness.

**28 Let him sit alone and be silent**

**Since He has laid it on him.**

- Silence implies both an acceptance of God’s will and a refusal to complain to others.

- Silence also implies humility.

- An acceptance of God’s justice demonstrates that God is right and we are wrong.

- God’s Word was very clear of what the consequences for disobedience would be.

- Therefore keeping our mouths shut is the appropriate response.

### **Deut 28:1-2**

- 1 "Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.
- 2 "All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the Lord your God:

### **Deut 30:1-5**

- 1 "So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the Lord your God has banished you, and you return to the Lord your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons,
- 3 then the Lord your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you.
- 4 "If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back.
- 5 "The Lord your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

### **29 Let him put his mouth in the dust,**

#### ***Perhaps there is hope.***

- This is a custom of throwing oneself in the most humble manner on the ground, and involves the idea of silence, because the mouth, placed in the dust, and cannot speak.
- “Perhaps” there is hope. My actions do not mean I can manipulate God. It is His timetable not mine.

### **Lam 3:27-38**

- 27 It is good for a man that he should bear the yoke in his youth.
- 28 Let him sit alone and be silent
- Since He has laid it on him.
- 29 Let him put his mouth in the dust, Perhaps there is hope.**
- 30 Let him give his cheek to the smiter, Let him be filled with reproach.
- 31 For the Lord will not reject forever,
- 32 For if He causes grief, Then He will have compassion
- According to His abundant lovingkindness.

### **Lam 3:27-38**

- 27 It is good for a man that he should bear the yoke in his youth.
- 28 Let him sit alone and be silent
- Since He has laid it on him.
- 29 Let him put his mouth in the dust, Perhaps there is hope.
- 30 Let him give his cheek to the smiter, Let him be filled with reproach.**
- 31 For the Lord will not reject forever,
- 32 For if He causes grief, Then He will have compassion
- According to His abundant lovingkindness.

### **30 Let him give his cheek to the smiter,**

#### ***Let him be filled with reproach.***

- Offering his cheek is absolute surrender.
- Believers, under divine discipline, should patiently receive the suffering and reproach God had appointed for them.
- Jesus gave his cheek to the one who strikes him as He patiently received the suffering His Father had appointed (Matthew 26:67-68, Luke 22:64).

### **Lam 3:27-38**

- 27 It is good for a man that he should bear the yoke in his youth.
- 28 Let him sit alone and be silent
- Since He has laid it on him.
- 29 Let him put his mouth in the dust, Perhaps there is hope.
- 30 Let him give his cheek to the smiter, Let him be filled with reproach.
- 31 For the Lord will not reject forever,**
- 32 For if He causes grief, Then He will have compassion
- According to His abundant lovingkindness.

### **31 For the Lord will not reject forever,**

- In verses 31-36, Jeremiah gives a defense of God carrying out divine discipline and that He is just and right for doing so.

#### **Jeremiah answers objections:**

##### **1. God's discipline is too long.**

- It is not the desire or purpose of God to discipline the believer forever.
- Discipline has its limit.

### **Heb 12:7-11**

- 7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?
- 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.
- 9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?
- 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.
- 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

### **Lam 3:27-38**

27 It is good for a man that he should bear  
The yoke in his youth.

28 Let him sit alone and be silent

Since He has laid it on him.

29 Let him put his mouth in the dust,  
Perhaps there is hope.

30 Let him give his cheek to the smiter,  
Let him be filled with reproach.

31 For the Lord will not reject forever,

**32 For if He causes grief,**

**Then He will have compassion**

**According to His abundant lovingkindness.**

### **32 For if He causes grief,**

**Then He will have compassion**

**According to His abundant lovingkindness.**

#### **2. God only wants to cause grief.**

- Our grief from His discipline will eventually give way to His mercy and compassion.
- Do we deserve eternal punishment for our sin? Yes, that's justice.
- But mercy does not give us what we deserve.
- Where would we be without His great, great mercy? Where would I go with out His forgiveness?
- His loyal love is abundant . . . it will never run out.

### **33 For He does not afflict willingly**

**Or grieve the sons of men.**

34 To crush under His feet

All the prisoners of the land,

35 To deprive a man of justice

In the presence of the Most High,

36 To defraud a man in his lawsuit —

Of these things the Lord does not approve.

37 Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass,  
Unless the Lord has commanded it?

38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High  
That both good and ill go forth?

### **33 For He does not afflict willingly**

**Or grieve the sons of men.**

#### **3. God loves to afflict believers.**

- His justice compels Him to punish our sin.
- The distinction between injury inflicted with malice and injury inflicted with reluctance, is motive.
- The end God has in view is to remove the causes of pain.
- Example: The surgeon does not inflict pain willingly with his knife to just cause pain - he inflicts pain because he cannot help the problem without inflicting pain. He does it to help. The thief inflicts pain with his knife willingly. He does it to hinder. See the difference in motive?
- God is not out to derive satisfaction from causing pain and grief.

33 For He does not afflict willingly  
Or grieve the sons of men.

**34 To crush under His feet**

**All the prisoners of the land,**

35 To deprive a man of justice

In the presence of the Most High,

36 To defraud a man in his lawsuit —

Of these things the Lord does not approve.

37 Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass,

Unless the Lord has commanded it?

38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High

That both good and ill go forth?

33 For He does not afflict willingly

Or grieve the sons of men.

34 To crush under His feet

All the prisoners of the land,

**35 To deprive a man of justice**

**In the presence of the Most High,**

36 To defraud a man in his lawsuit —

Of these things the Lord does not approve.

37 Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass,

Unless the Lord has commanded it?

38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High

That both good and ill go forth?

**34 To crush under His feet**

**All the prisoners of the land,**

**4. God goes over and above what justice demands.**

- If justice is being served (prisoners), then God is not one to crush.
- They are serving their sentence, so God is not going to “pile on”.

**35 To deprive a man of justice**

**In the presence of the Most High,**

**5. God is unfair and not just in His discipline.**

- God therefore disapproves heartily of any attempt to deprive an individual of his rights under the law, or to condemn him unjustly.

33 For He does not afflict willingly

Or grieve the sons of men.

34 To crush under His feet

All the prisoners of the land,

35 To deprive a man of justice

In the presence of the Most High,

**36 To defraud a man in his lawsuit —**

**Of these things the Lord does not approve.**

37 Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass,

Unless the Lord has commanded it?

38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High

That both good and ill go forth?

**36 To defraud a man in his lawsuit —**

**Of these things the Lord does not approve.**

**6. God thwarts and denies rightful justice.**

- If a man has a case, God will not deny him to make that case.

33 For He does not afflict willingly  
Or grieve the sons of men.

34 To crush under His feet

All the prisoners of the land,

35 To deprive a man of justice

In the presence of the Most High,

36 To defraud a man in his lawsuit —

Of these things the Lord does not approve.

**37 Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass,**

**Unless the Lord has commanded it?**

38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High

That both good and ill go forth?

33 For He does not afflict willingly

Or grieve the sons of men.

34 To crush under His feet

All the prisoners of the land,

35 To deprive a man of justice

In the presence of the Most High,

36 To defraud a man in his lawsuit —

Of these things the Lord does not approve.

37 Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass,

Unless the Lord has commanded it?

**38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High**

**That both good and ill go forth?**

**37 Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass,**

**Unless the Lord has commanded it?**

• The only way anything happens in this world is because God has commanded it, even our speech is under His direction.

• Like creation, and all acts of God, He only has to speak and it comes to pass.

• Notice that its not the word “allowed” but “commanded.”

“Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.” (Proverbs 19:21)

“You ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’” (James 4:15)

“I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.” (Job 42:2)

“Our God is in heaven; He does whatever pleases Him.” (Psalm 115:3)

**38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High**

**That both good and ill go forth?**

• So when God speaks, what kind of commands come forth?

• Is it only good things, kind things, lovely things, peaceful things, happy things?

• Notice it is good and **רָעָא** (*raah*) - bad or evil (natural or moral). adversity, affliction, bad, calamity, displeasure (-ure), distress, evil, exceedingly, great, grief, harm, heavy, hurt (-ful), ill (favoured), mark, mischief, misery, naught (-ty), noisome, not please, sad (-ly), sore, sorrow, trouble, vex, wicked (-ly, -ness, one), worse (-st), wretchedness, wrong.

• All of it has a purpose. All of it serves the purposes of God. There is nothing that is purposeless.

**1. God has decided what will happen and has ordained everything that will happen from the greatest events down to the smallest of details.**

**2. God actively brings about that which He ordains.**

**Eph 1:11**

1.1 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

*If God does not determine everything that happens, we cannot speak of Him as being sovereign. Sovereign means total, 100%.*

**3. God has ordained that sin, evil, suffering, wickedness, disaster, calamity exist.**

**Ecc1 7:13-14**

13 Consider the work of God,

For who is able to straighten what He has bent?

14 In the day of prosperity be happy,

But in the day of adversity consider --

God has made the one as well as the other

So that man will not discover (forecast) anything that will be after him.

**Ex 4:11**

11 And the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth?

Or who makes him dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?"

### **Amos 3:6**

6 Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid?  
shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?

### **Isa 45:6-7**

6 I am the LORD, and there is none else.  
7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil:  
I the LORD do all these things.

### **Lam 3:38**

8 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High  
that good and evil come?

### **Prov 16:4**

4 The LORD has made everything for its purpose,  
even the wicked for the day of trouble.

### **1 Sam 16:14**

14 Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit  
from the LORD terrorized him.

“When God ordained the death of his Son for my sin, he ordained that sin happen. It's a sin to murder the Son of God, yet nothing is clearer in the Bible than that God bruised his own Son. He willed that there be a Pilate with his expediency, a Judas with his betrayal, a Herod with his mockery, soldiers with their scorn, crowds and mobs crying, "Crucify him, Crucify him." All of that is the fulfillment of prophecy and the performance of the sovereign will of God. And every minute of it should be hated. Yet we should thank God for it, because it saved us.”

- John Piper

### **Isa 53:10**

10 But the Lord was pleased  
To crush Him, putting Him to grief;  
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,

"It implies no contradiction to suppose that an act may be an evil act, and yet that it is a good thing that such an act should come to pass. . . As for instance, it might be an evil thing to crucify Christ, but yet it was a good thing that the crucifying of Christ came to pass."

-Jonathan Edwards

### **Job 1:20-21**

20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and  
he fell to the ground and worshiped.

21 He said,

"Naked I came from my mother's womb,

And naked I shall return there.

The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away.

Blessed be the name of the LORD."

### **Job 42:11**

11 Then all his brothers, and all his sisters, and all who had  
known him before, came to him, and they ate bread with  
him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him  
for all the evil that the LORD had brought on him.

### **4. Is God the author of sin & evil?**

Depends:

If you mean God brings about sin & evil to tempt man to get him to fall into sin, or to inject fresh evil into the heart of man, then "No".

If you mean that God is the author of a plan that contains characters, plots, events, details, good things, evil things, sinful things, suffering, wickedness, disaster, calamity, then "Yes".

1. *God never commits sin.*
2. *God is not the positive cause of sin.*
3. *God cannot be blamed for sin.*
4. *God, on a micro scale, does not approve of sin.*  
*He hates it and justly punishes it.*

#### 5. God does not ordain sin for its own sake.

- When God ordains a sinful action, it is not for the sake of the sin itself. Rather, it is for the sake of bringing about a greater good.
- When humans sin, we do it because we delight in the sin. Our intentions are for evil. But God does not ordain sin because He delights in it. Rather, His intentions are for good. He ordains evil because He delights in the good that He plans to bring out of it.
- There is therefore a “good” which is brought about and possible because God has ordained evil to exist. A creation without evil would be vastly inferior to what it now is. It is good that evil exists.

#### 5. God is behind good and evil in different ways.

- He is behind good in a way that renders Him fully deserving of all of the credit for it, but He is behind evil in such a way that He deserves none of the blame for it.
- Sin proceeds from in the human heart, not God. God ordains its manifestation for His glory and to accomplish the good He has purposed.

"To put it bluntly, God stands behind evil in such a way that not even evil takes place outside the bounds of his sovereignty, yet the evil is not morally chargeable to him: it is always chargeable to the Secondary agents, to secondary causes [i.e., those who actually do it]. On the other hand, God stands behind good in such a way that it not only takes place within the bounds of his sovereignty, but it is always chargeable to him, and only derivatively to secondary agents...If this sounds just a bit too convenient for God, my initial response (though there is more to be said) is that according to the Bible this is the only God there is."

- D.A. Carson

"God is more glorious for having conceived and created and governed a world like this with all its evil. If you would see God's glory and savor his glory and magnify his glory in this world, do not remain wavering before the sovereignty of God in the face of great evil. Take his book in your hand, plead for his Spirit of illumination and humility and trust, and settle this matter, that you might be unshakable in the day of your own calamity."

- John Piper

"God uses evil for a greater good. His ultimate design is to glorify Himself, and all things work towards that end. The Bible does not give an exhaustive list of ways that God uses evil for His good purposes, but some of the ways include displaying His grace and justice, judging evil, saving sinners, shocking sinners so that they will repent, disciplining Christians, and vindicating Himself."

- John M. Frame

"We know that God Himself never does that which is evil. Nevertheless, He also ordains whatsoever comes to pass . . . . He does ordain that evil exists. If it does exist, and if God is sovereign, then obviously He must have been able to prevent its existence. If He allowed evil to enter into this universe, it could only be by His sovereign decision. Since His sovereign decisions always follow the perfection of His being, we must conclude that His decision to allow evil to exist is a good decision."

- R.C. Sproul

"God may hate a thing as it is in itself, and considered simply as evil, and yet . . . it may be his will it should come to pass,"

- Jonathan Edwards

## How Deep is the Sovereignty of God?

Sovereignty of God

Good

Disasters

Calamities

Sin

Evil

### **Gen 50:20**

20 "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

"meant" (khaw-shav) = to purpose.

### **Rom 8:28**

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.