

## The Sovereignty of God and Sexual Abuse:

### Some thoughts for victims

God wields infinite power and control over the universe and everything in it. In Job Chapters 38-41 God reminds Job of this. He had begun to question God regarding the cause of his suffering. God responds not with an answer but with a detailed account of His power over the entire creation: He reminds him of His absolute sovereignty. From the beginning of the created universe through to the ordering of the sun to set and rise, the fathering of a drop of dew, provision of food for the raven and the strength to the horse, God reveals His dominion over all. Genesis Chapter One tells with startling simplicity the way God created the world and man. It also tells of His creating the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the very existence of which was to become central to the account of man's rebellion against God and the consequences in terms of continual sin ravaging not only physical creation but the mind and heart of humankind. Isaiah 45:7 records God's words through the prophet: ***I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil. I the LORD do all these things.*** The Bible tells also of God's foreknowledge of men and women's actions on earth and their eternal pathways: to hell or to heaven.

God therefore has dominion over nature, man, salvation-and evil. Is this, therefore, also the God who created your abuser, had control over the situation within which the abuse would occur, foreknew it would happen, who saw what was happening to you, and who chose

not to stop it? Yes. *But He did not cause the evil.* To identify the ultimate cause we need to understand both the nature of humanity and the existence and desires of Satan.

In the Garden to be populated by the first human beings God provided everything they needed. He also provided them with choice demonstrated in the very existence of a tree, whose fruit they were told not to touch. That provision of choice provided the conditions for freedom but also the potential from which evil might emerge. A wrong choice would be made, a choice *foreknown* by God but not *determined* by Him. Reaching for the forbidden fruit was, in one sense, simply an exercise in human free will. However, the ultimate choice was not simply to touch or not touch the fruit: that choice was only the *expression* of something else of eternal significance. The ultimate choice was to listen to God and trust Him or listen to His adversary, Satan, cunningly encouraging them to make the wrong choice. They chose the latter.

The reality of Satan, both in the Garden and in the world today, does not negate human responsibility. However, he was and remains a powerful enemy intent on undermining God and therefore cleverly manipulates situations and even God's Word. In Hebrew the name Satan literally means 'adversary'. Known also as the devil, which means 'slanderer', Satan is the most powerful of the created angels who chose to try to elevate themselves above God. His pride and subsequent fall from heaven is symbolically told in Ezekiel 28:15-27. He is described as a 'murderer from the beginning... [and] a liar (John 8:44). The recorded words of Satan in the Garden of Eden to Eve testify to his attempt to challenge God (Genesis 3:1-6). Satan did not make Eve reach for the fruit-he tempted her and using her God given power to choose-she took and ate.

Could God have stopped the hand of Eve reaching for the forbidden fruit? Yes. But that reaching hand was not about a simple piece of fruit: it was about not trusting in the God who told them not to reach. It was about desiring that which was forbidden. It was about a heart and mind that rejected God as Father and chose to believe the words of a liar. God could have stopped the hand reaching for the fruit, made it impossible for Satan to tempt Eve, and prevented Adam from colluding in the rebellion against God's command: but at that point humanity as we now know and experience it would have ceased to exist.

Sovereign over all creation, God created the conditions from which evil *might* emerge. He created an angel who He knew would rebel. He created the first man and first woman who He knew would rebel and cause sin to enter the entire human race. But He did not *cause* the evil to emerge. Today we inhabit a world whereby that choice is still available. If we want to demand from God that He intervene to stop every act of sexual abuse, we must also accept His intervention in thwarting our 'hand' for every evil thought and deed which does not please God-for every sin we commit. We may not abuse but we may refuse to acknowledge God despite creation declaring His glory. Shall God take from us the freedom to reject Him? Those who directly crucified Jesus did so with the freedom that He gave them. His common grace made possible soldiers with the physical strength, the tools and the wood to create things. They chose to use such resources to create a cross and nail God in flesh to it. They chose to participate in history's worst form of execution. History's greatest injustice, greatest evil, was, however, *purposed* by God Himself: history's greatest injustice, greatest evil, was used by Him to bring eternal salvation to many. The greatest good created from the greatest evil.

If we are to accept that God is all powerful, we too must accept the following: God created the abuser, he ultimately had control over the situation within which the abuse would occur, he foreknew it would

happen, saw what was happening - and chose not to stop it. These are hard truths. But there is another truth: God abhors sin-including sexual abuse. He did not make your abuser assault you. Your abuser, like Adam and Eve, made a choice to do that which is contrary to the Will of God. Satan continues to inhabit this world-a defeated foe but one who in the purposes of God is allowed to still roam-spreading lies, distorting that which God created as good. And people choose to listen. It is true that if God made us as robots, unable to sin, unable to hear the whispers of Satan and make the wrong choices, sexual abuse would never exist. But the loss of that humanity which allows us to love another, to freely think, to wonder at the stars in the night sky, to appreciate the beauty of a flower and the greatness of a mountain – and yes to wonder about God’s plan for this world and us- would be the necessary price.

In His mercy, God has not left us alone as we deal with the consequences of wrong choices. He used history’s darkest day to bring light to the world. He used the evil of men to overcome the evil of men and the power of Satan. **He brought good, not from preventing their choices, but *through* their choices.** He continues to do the same today. Jesus, the Christ, can provide peace and hope to those who suffer; He promises rest to those who are weary. If we want to know this truth, if we want to know Him who can provide such rest, then we must repent of our own sins, our own wrong choices, and humbly accept the truth of His sovereignty over our own lives. This is God’s command. If we obey, then He will give us the spirit of Christ to indwell us. With this comes power: the power to make the right choices and the power to see the Light of Christ overcome the darkness of sexual abuse in our lives.