

Letters From a Skeptic
Lessons 4-5: Is your God all-powerful?

"All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth."

Matt 28:18



"If there is a 'limit' on God's power, it is there only by His decision, not some power outside Himself."

Correspondence 7: "Is your God all-powerful?"

<Read father's seventh letter, pp. 55-56>

1. Beginning to see some things as "plausible"
2. However, he doesn't buy the "**cosmic warfare**" business (angels, demons, Satan, etc.)
3. Also acknowledges the truth in the argument that **we become our decisions** (corresp. 6) and says it's a "*scary thought for a 70-year-old like me.*"
4. He's **still hung up** over the idea that God is "**all powerful**" but **can't use His power** to prevent evil things from happening.
5. Says that when his **wife Arlyle died**, the Catholic priest attributed it to "*the mysterious will of God.*" Obviously that did **more harm than good**.
6. He can't believe the "*God had a purpose*" line some Christians use when tragedy strikes
7. He says "*It seems to me as if the only God worth believing in is one in control.*"

Comments? (only if time allows...)

<Read son's reply, pp. 56-60>

Greg answer's his father's **three questions**:

Q1: Is my God all powerful?

1. When God created free creatures He **surrendered/delegated some of His power**.
2. Surrender of power is a completely **voluntary** act of God. If there's a limit on God's power, it is there by **His decision**, not some power outside Himself.

Q2: Is God in control?

3. It is God Himself that decides how much power each creature has. God is, in this sense, in control.
4. Son says "*But to 'allow' something and to 'purpose it' or 'cause it' are two very different things.*" In other words, **stop blaming God for the bad things that happen!**

Q3: What good is it to believe in God if He's not in total control of the world?

5. For Christians, the main business of this life isn't this life at all, but the next!
6. **Believing in God** means believing **that all He stands for** (love, truth, justice, peace, etc.) **will ultimately triumph**.

"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

7. Even though God has “**loaned**” us some power, **He is still in control**. Only He knows what this world would be like without His holy influence.
8. Scriptures to help us understand that God has ultimate authority:

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’”

Matt 28:18

“Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death. For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, ‘All things are put in subjection,’ it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.”

1 Cor 15:24-28

Correspondence 10: “Why didn’t God spare your mother?”

<Read father’s tenth letter, pp. 72-73>

8. Ed doesn’t see God as very interested in us
9. Notes how easy it would have been for God to “snuff out” Hitler (abort; fatal disease)
 - a. Says *“It happens all the time. Why not to him?”*
 - b. (NB: Dad still thinks God knows the “free will” future decisions of people.)
10. Says that prayer is **unsuccessful**. Equates it to same odds as **chance**.
11. Finally gets to the real issue—**the death of his wife Arlyle**
 - a. Understands that God may not listen to “sinful adults” but why not to **kids**?
 - b. Says if God cared, he would have **saved Arlyle** and **saved everyone a lot of pain**.
12. He concludes that God simply **doesn’t really care**.
13. Closes this **very raw letter** by saying *“There you have it, straight from the gut.”*

Comments?

<Read son’s reply, pp. 74-77>

9. Very powerful “from the gut” response.
10. Some of the more **striking comments**:
 - *“Sometimes understanding comes to an end or is incapable of addressing the depth of the issues. ...I think, Dad, that you are in just this situation.”*
 - *“I, too, have often asked God why mom died. And I, too, never received an answer.”*
 - *“God is not offended [by our questions and honest emotion]. God loves honesty.”*
 - *“Far more important than an answer ...I received healing.”*
 - *“Christ isn’t our adversary in times of suffering: He’s our cure.”*
 - *“Love is the only life source for the soul and the only medicine for its wounds.”*
 - *“Jesus suffers with us in our suffering.”*
 - *“However low we sink, God is with us. He’s there at the bottom waiting for us!”*
 - *“He’s in the midst of all we go through.”*
 - *“His healing strength is in His vulnerability to pain.”*

11. Some **scriptures** to help us understand this **wise teaching**:

“...but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

Gen 2:17

“So when Jesus came, He found that [Lazarus] had already been in the tomb four days. Martha then said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if You had been here my brother would not have died.’”

John 11:17, 21

“Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, ‘Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.’ When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, and said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to Him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus wept. So the Jews were saying, ‘See how He loved him!’ But some of them said, ‘Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?’”

John 11:32-37

Comments?

Homework: Read [Correspondences 13, 14, and 15.](#)