

God is still on Plan A

Drew Costen

(First published: February 12, 2022/Last revision: April 28, 2024)

Just as a heads up, this Bible study is an edited excerpt from my (much longer) Bible study titled: *“What the Bible really says about heaven, hell, judgement, death, evil, sin, and salvation”* (and I’d highly recommend reading that one all the way through from beginning to end if you’re able to, in order to get the full picture of what the Bible is talking about when it comes to salvation; but for those who don’t have the time to read that one right now, please do read this Bible study carefully).

In the longer Bible study mentioned above — as well as in another edited excerpt of it titled *“Unmerited suffering and God”* — I mentioned that those of us in the body of Christ believe that God is 100% in control of absolutely everything, and that the “absolutely everything” He’s in control of includes evil¹ and the suffering it can result in (so please go read one of those Bible studies before finishing this one if you aren’t already completely aware of this fact). That said, it isn’t just evil that God takes credit for. If Scripture is to be believed, He ultimately takes credit for absolutely everything,² which would also have to include sin too (unless sin somehow doesn’t fall under the category of “absolutely everything”). This idea can seem confusing to most people when they first hear it, because it would seem logical that God wouldn’t want us to sin, and in fact He seems to tell people not to do so in Scripture. Well, the truth is, He *doesn’t* want us to sin, and He does indeed tell people not to. But at the same time, He still wills us to sin. This might sound like a contradiction at first, but it’s really not. Just as with the seven options I provided for solving “the problem of evil” that I mentioned in the other Bible studies (and, again, please go read one of them if this isn’t something you’re aware of yet), it comes down

¹ I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things. — Isaiah 45:7

² For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. — Romans 11:36

to understanding the difference between God *wanting* something to happen (in the sense of enjoying something that might occur) and *willing* something to happen (in the sense of allowing, or even causing, something He doesn't enjoy, but knows needs to happen, to take place).

As an example, someone might not *want* to go to work on a given day, because they might prefer to lie in bed and watch TV, but they can still *will* themselves to go to work if they need to earn money to pay their bills. Simply put, someone (even God) can will themselves to do something they take no pleasure in and would prefer not to do, because they recognize that the end result of doing that thing will be better than not having done it, as discussed in those other Bible studies. Some of you are now thinking, that's all well and good, as far as what God "wants" versus what He "wills" goes, but what about His commandments? Isn't it His will that humans obey them, meaning that we don't sin? Well, this comes down to not recognizing another difference, which is the difference between His absolute will and His relative will (or, perhaps better put, His preceptive will³ and His providential will⁴), meaning the difference between His public commandments (or precepts) and His hidden intentions. Not recognizing the difference between these two different types of "wills" leads Christians to believe that God never intended for people (beginning with Adam) to disobey Him in the first place, when the truth is that He secretly intended for people to rebel against His commandments all along. A great example of this is His commandment against murder.⁵ God made murder a sin,

³ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. — Matthew 7:21

⁴ In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: — Ephesians 1:11

⁵ Thou shalt not kill. — Exodus 20:13

yet He had the murder of Christ planned⁶ from the foundation of the world,⁷ knowing full well when He gave the commandment against murder to Moses that without murder there would be no salvation for anyone (and I'm sure it should go without saying that God didn't enjoy seeing His Son tortured and killed, but He still *willed* it to happen⁸ because He knew it *had* to happen in order to accomplish His purposes).

A less obvious, yet no less helpful, example (and one which explains how it all began in the first place) would be His commandment to Adam and Eve to avoid eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When one considers the facts, that while He told them not to eat of it,⁹ He all the while placed the tree right in the centre of the garden with nothing to make it difficult to get at (when He didn't have to place it in the garden — or even anywhere on the planet — at all if He really didn't want anyone to sin), and made it look like good food and pleasant to the eyes and to be desired to make one wise,¹⁰ and even placed the serpent right there to tempt them (and nobody is anywhere that God didn't specifically place them), not to mention the fact that, without eating it, humanity would not only never understand evil but would never truly

⁶ Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: — Acts 2:23

⁷ And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. — Revelation 13:8

⁸ Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. — Luke 22:42

⁹ And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest 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 shalt surely die. — Genesis 2:16-17

¹⁰ And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. — Genesis 3:6

understand good either¹¹ (it wasn't called just "the tree of the knowledge of evil," it was called "the tree of the knowledge of *good* and evil"), it becomes obvious that God actually intended for them to disobey Him so that death and sin could enter the world (and, again, had already intended to have His Son killed prior to this, which would be a strange plan if He didn't also intend for sin and death to exist; God doesn't make contingency plans — each plan He makes is something that He fully intends to take place and that will indeed happen, so the death of His Son wasn't just something He had in mind to do *if* humanity happened to sin, but was instead a plan He fully intended to implement long *before* Adam ever sinned, and in fact the reason Adam sinned was so that humanity could be mortal in order that He could implement the plan).

And, of course, the entire reason He even gave Israel the Mosaic law at all¹² was so that they would sin all the more.¹³ It might seem hard to believe, and some even try to deny it by making the assertion — one that is not only found nowhere in Scripture but that is actually contradicted by it — that "God is not the author of sin," but the Bible actually tells us that God has not only purposely locked up His human creation in unbelief,¹⁴ but that He has also

¹¹ For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. — Genesis 3:5

¹² For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. — Romans 7:5-11

¹³ Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: — Romans 5:20

¹⁴ For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. — Romans 11:32

purposely locked us up in sin,¹⁵ in vanity, and in corruption¹⁶ (meaning in decay, humiliation, and death), all in order that He can later set us all free (He can't free us if we aren't first locked up).

This means that, while sin is still sinful, it's not something that surprised God, or even something that He didn't actually secretly intend to come into existence in the first place (again, for the purpose of revealing grace— since, again, without evil we could never truly appreciate goodness, and without sin we could never truly understand grace; contrast is often necessary to fully comprehend things, and knowing this helps us come to understand that the existence of sin was actually necessary for God to complete His purposes).

I should probably add, knowing the meaning of the word "sin" might help make what I'm saying seem a little less blasphemous to those reading this who are horrified by the idea of the necessity of the existence of sin. You see, כָּחַט/"khaw-taw'" in Hebrew, and ἁμαρτία/"ham-ar-tee'-ah" in Greek (which we translate as "sin" in English), is a word that simply means "to miss the mark" — for example, to not hit the bullseye on a target with an arrow or a target with a stone thrown from a sling — as the book of Judges made clear when it mentioned seven hundred lefthanded men who "could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss,"¹⁷ with the word "miss" in that verse being the same Hebrew word כָּחַט that is translated as "sin" in other passages). So yes, Adam missed the mark by failing to avoid eating the forbidden fruit, but God hit the bullseye perfectly

¹⁵ But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. — Galatians 3:22

¹⁶ For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. — Romans 8:20-21

¹⁷ Among all this people there were seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss. — Judges 20:16

when Adam sinned because that was His plan for Adam from the beginning, which means that even though He's responsible for it from an absolute perspective, God didn't sin by ultimately being behind it all because He didn't miss the mark, since sin and death entering the world through Adam was His intended "mark" all along (and for those who insist that God would never give anyone a rule that He actually wanted them to break, if His intention *was* for Adam to sin, He *had* to make a rule for Adam to break or else Adam couldn't have fulfilled His intention that sin enter the world, although Romans 5:20 also tells us that He absolutely would anyway). This also means that, if Adam *hadn't* sinned, God would then have been the sinner instead, because it would mean He had failed to accomplish His intended goal — and for those who want to insist that God's intended goal was a world where humanity never sinned, that would also make God a sinner because Adam *did* sin, which means that God would have also missed the mark if that sin-free world was actually His intended goal. And if His plan was simply to let Adam do whatever he wanted and to simply sit back and watch what happens, as some seem to believe, having no goal for the world at all, and the death of Christ simply being His contingency plan to use if Adam did happen to sin, that would make God an extremely irresponsible deity, and His sovereignty would be a lie, as would be all the passages of Scripture that tell us He's completely in control and that all is of Him.

And Scripture *does* tell us that He's completely in control. In fact, the complete sovereignty of God and His purposes for creation from before it all began is one of the most important factors in Scripture, and is taught throughout it. And while most Christians would claim to believe in His sovereignty, not very many actually do, because very few of them actually believe He has a reason for absolutely everything that has happened in creation, and that He has had very specific plans for the ages (and those in each age) from the very

beginning. Instead of knowing (and glorifying) God as God,¹⁸ which would involve them understanding that He is completely in control, placing everything where He intends it to be and subjecting all to His will, nearly all Christians believe that God really hoped Adam wouldn't actually sin, but that God is now on Plan B because Adam did end up sinning. They just don't believe Paul when he wrote in Ephesians 1:11 that God works *all* things after the counsel of His own will, not just *some* things. But the fact is that He really does, which means that everything about creation — be it good and evil, righteousness and sin, pleasure and suffering, faith and unbelief, and even the crucifixion¹⁹ and the devil²⁰ (who was created the way he is today, contrary to popular opinion, and has been a murderer²¹ — and, to put it simply, a sinner²² — from his very beginning, for the purpose of getting Adam to sin, and for bringing about evil in general²³) — was all intended by God from before the beginning of creation. And this isn't just about God being able to see the future and then accounting for it in His plans either, because while God indeed is able to see the future, He also *declares* what is going to be done from the beginning, and what He intends

¹⁸ Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. — Romans 1:21

¹⁹ But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. — 1 Corinthians 2:7-8

²⁰ By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent. — Job 26:13

²¹ Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. — John 8:44

²² He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. — 1 John 3:8

²³ Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. — Isaiah 54:16

to be done *will* be done.²⁴ Which means that if God's intention truly was a world without any sin, no sin could have ever occurred. To put it simply, everything that has happened and will happen occurs exactly as God planned it, because God is still on Plan A.

²⁴ Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: — Isaiah 46:10