

“I Can’t Forgive God for Taking All Those People in the WTC!”

I saw a distraught woman on the news asking, “Pray? Who do we pray to? God took all those people in the buildings !” It’s obvious there is so much hurt and a sense of betrayal toward God for allowing such a horrific thing to happen. I’m having a rough time forgiving God for allowing such terrible evil in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

I’m so glad you wrote.

A lot of people struggle with anger toward God when we experience pain or when bad things happen. (I completely understand, and carried anger toward Him for many years myself for allowing me to get polio, and not healing me when I begged Him to. That story is [here](#).)

In his excellent book *I Should Forgive, But . . .* [1998, Nashville: Word Publishing, p. 143-157], Dr. Chuck Lynch addresses this issue. There are three problems with a perceived need to forgive God.

*1. It implies **an offense**. But God does not and can not sin against us. He does not morally offend us and does not need to be forgiven.*

The number one complaint against God is that He failed to protect. We can be angry that He did not protect us, or He did not protect other innocent people. We believe a good God does not let bad things happen to good people. Bad things only happen to bad people. Therefore, if bad things happen to good people, God “did us dirty.” But we live in a fallen world; bad things happen to people, period. Our longing for a perfect world where nothing bad happens is a perfectly

legitimate longing for the Eden we were created for, and God will re-create that perfect world in the future. . . but we don't live there yet.

If God doesn't "perform" as we think He should, we think He has offended us. The real failure is not with God's performance, it's with our misperception of His character.

We are upset when we realize that God knew the bad thing was going to happen and He didn't stop it. Why not? Because He is graciously patient now, but His full wrath will be poured out on sin and unrighteousness at a later time.

Acts of nature such as weather tragedies, birth defects and diseases, as well as the consequences of things like terrorist attacks, are also perceived as offenses by God against man.

Many people believe it's God's job to keep their lives free from pain and loss, especially if they are faithful to Him. They fail to remember two things:

- God does not suspend the natural laws of nature for believers. He also does not violate the gift of free will to humanity, even when a person's choice means others will be hurt.
- While we have the promise that all pain and tears will be wiped away in heaven, this is earth.

2. It implies **accountability**. We demand to know the "WHY???" We think God owes it to us to explain why He does what He does, and why He allows the things that He does. And if He doesn't explain it to us [and often, if not usually, He doesn't], then many cut off fellowship with Him. "I'll show You, God, I won't believe in You anymore/I will live in rebellion/I will ignore You!"

God does not owe us an explanation. He is not accountable to

us. He does as He pleases (Ps. 115:3), and He has the right to be the sovereign Lord without explaining to His creatures how his actions today, in time, fit into the big plan of eternity.

*3. It implies **payment**. Somebody has to pay for sin. Jesus paid for our sins—but who's going to pay for God's "sins" against us?*

Our anger against God is like a red light on a car's dashboard. It alerts us that something is wrong and we need to deal with what we're thinking and thus, what we're feeling. The red light tells us we need to grow into acceptance of our losses and adjust to them over time. When God allows bad things to happen, we get mad because of our loss and hurt. We don't need to forgive Him; we need to ask for grace to accept what He has allowed to happen.

God doesn't sin against us; He does things we don't like. He understands our anger the same way a parent understands a child's anger when the parent allows the doctor to give the child a shot. Just as a parent acts in the child's best interest, God is always acting in our best interests even in the midst of horrific evil and pain. He can do that because He is much bigger and more powerful than we can even begin to imagine.

God allows us to experience pain because His goal is our growth and maturity. He is in the process of developing a mature and solid Bride for His Son Jesus, and He knows that the best way for us to grow is often through pain. Even the Lord Jesus, although the Son of God, "learned obedience from what He suffered" (Heb. 5:8). God has a bigger plan than keeping us comfortable.

The real issue is to put aside the misconception that God needs to be forgiven, and move through to trust and acceptance.

I hope this helps.

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