

**Think about it.**

### **If God Is Love Why. . .? By Paul Hoover**

If God is love, why does war exist? If God is love, why do innocent children die? If God is love, why are there so many heartaches in life? Some people allow these questions to keep them from obeying the Gospel of Christ. Some Christians allow these questions to detract from their service to the Lord. No doubt, some ask these questions in sincerity. They are truly searching for answers to these questions. But, some that ask these questions act as if they have the right to sit in judgement of God.

As we seek answers to these questions, there are two passages of Scripture that we must bear in mind. The first is Isaiah 55:8-9.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

We are simply unable to fully understand God’s intricate design for the workings of the universe. This, however, does not mean that we cannot know some things concerning the subject of this article.

The second passage of Scripture is Isaiah 59:1-2.

“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that he will not hear.”

To honestly approach the questions of our concern, we must understand and never forget the horrendous effect of sin. Only with this understanding can we place blame where it truly belongs.

### **If God is love, why does war exist?**

It is certainly the case that God commanded the destruction of entire nations. Why would a God of love do that? What some people do not understand and others refuse to believe is that even that destruction was a result of God’s love.

The ultimate expression of God’s love was the sending of his beloved Son into the world. “For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). God made promises concerning his Son. In Genesis 22:18, God made a promise to Abraham which concerned all of mankind. “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” God promised to send the Messiah through the seed of Abraham and the love of God demanded that this great promise be kept.

Certain nations would have destroyed the promise of God by destroying Abraham’s seed or corrupting the chosen people of God with evil practices. If allowed, those actions would have negated God’s promise concerning the Savior. Had those nations been allowed to destroy Abraham’s seed, thereby destroying the promise of God, the whole world would have suffered spiritual death. No hope of eternal life would have existed. So, God on occasion, commanded that these nations be destroyed. “Samuel also said to Saul, the Lord sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.’” The nation of Amalek had ambushed God’s chosen people as they wandered in the wilderness. However, there may be more to it than that. In Acts 10:34-35,

“ . . . Peter opened his mouth and said: In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.”

The character of God never changes. It has always been the case that “in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.” While it is true that some nations were destroyed due to the wrath of God, it is also true that God’s wrath could be turned aside by repentance. If the city

of Nineveh (in Jonah's day) was given an opportunity to repent, and God shows no partiality, is it not consistent with the nature of God that other nations would have been afforded this same opportunity? The opportunity for repentance may not have been extended on a national scale as it was in Nineveh; however, every individual surely had the opportunity to repent. Though many did not respond positively, God has always called sinners to repentance. That nation was destroyed because of sin. It was destroyed for the sin that it committed in the past and which it continued to practice. God did not cause Amalek to sin or to remain in sin. It was not a lack of love on God's part that destroyed that nation; rather it was their lack of love for God and for their fellow man which caused their destruction.

God does not start modern wars. We cannot blame God for what mankind freely chooses to do. In fact, war would neither exist, nor would it ever have existed if all of mankind was obedient to the will of God. There is one thing that every war has in common. At least one of the parties involved has not followed the will of God. War does not exist because of God. War exists in spite of God. God is love. If mankind does not practice love, that is not God's fault.

### **If God is love, why do innocent children die?**

If God is love, why do innocent children die? As we attempt to answer this question, we must first answer another question. Why does anyone die? The answer to that question is painfully simple. People die because of sin. God answered that question in Genesis 3:17-19.

"Then to Adam He said, Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, you shall not eat of it: cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return."

It was humanity who, through sin, brought death into the world and it is humanity who continues in sin by defying the Creator. But, so great is the love of God that in spite of our sinful nature, "He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). So great is the love of God that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Death is a result of mankind's sin, but the offer of eternal life is a result of God's love.

As we look at the specific question, "If God is love why do innocent children die?" we must recall the passage in Isaiah 55:8-9. God simply does not think like we think, nor are we able to completely understand his divine ways. We must, however, understand that God does not view physical death in the same way that we often do. In spite of our belief in eternal life, we wrestle with our view of death. Perhaps we yet perceive finality in death that we should strive to overcome. As we mature in faith, we should try to develop an eternal view.

In the game of baseball, a base runner has one desire. His desire is to get home. He knows that there are obstacles in his path. He knows that things can go wrong, but his focus is on getting home. His teammates share his desire. They want to see him get home and they wish to get home as well. Life is a lot more serious than baseball. Yet, if we could think in terms of getting home and seeing others get safely home, perhaps our view of physical death would alter in the light of eternal life. When an innocent child dies, he unquestionably goes home to spend eternity in the glorious presence of God. (This would include the children of Amalek who died at God's direction.) Mankind brought death into the world, but the innocent child goes to glory because of God's love. Does this mean we should not mourn the loss of a child? Of course not. It means that even in pain and while shedding tears, we can see God's love at work. God's love does not stop there. Parents who have lost innocent children to physical death can be reunited with their child forever in the presence of God, if they are obedient to God's will. They may lose some years with their child here in this world, but can gain a greater relationship with them, which will last forever in the presence of God.

### **If God is love, why are there so many heartaches in life?**

All the heartaches that exist in the world are a result of sin. Your heart may ache because of sin, which you have committed. Your heart may ache because the sin of someone else has effected your life. In either case, the blame for heartache rests squarely on the shoulders of humanity.

Heartaches also exist because God tempers justice with mercy. If God operated on justice alone, man's sin in Eden would have been justification for the destruction of the world. The very first sin would have ended all hope of eternal life. From Adam and Eve until this day, mankind chooses to sin. Sin brings heartache upon the world. But, God's love is evident in that he allows this sinful world to stand. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). God does not bring heartache upon anyone. We, through disobedience, bring heartache upon ourselves. Read the words of the risen Savior as recorded in Revelation 3:19. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent." To chasten means, "To instruct through correction." It is true that the Lord, motivated by love, may chasten or punish us when we have gone astray. However, we bring this corrective action upon ourselves. As parents, we understand that we do not chasten obedient children because it is not necessary. We punish or chasten our children only when they are disobedient. We do this in order to teach them the necessity of doing the right thing. Parental love demands that we correct our children when they are disobedient. When we have given our children rules by which to live, and we have instilled in them a set of principles and morals, and have set an example by our conduct, and they choose not to obey, their rebellion is not our fault. Because they have defied our rules, we could expel them from our homes and wash our hands of them, never allowing them to return under any circumstances. We could do that, but a loving parent would not do that. In love, we would discipline them. That discipline may mean that we must administer a serious punishment. The child, due to this punishment, may suffer, but he brought this punishment on himself.

When Christians succumb to sin, God could wash his hands of us. He could cast us out of his kingdom and never allow us to return under any circumstances. But, because God is love, he allows his straying children to be restored to him through repentance. Because he desires our repentance, God chastens us. We may suffer because of God's chastisement, but this suffering and heartache is brought on by our disobedient actions.

God is love; don't try to second-guess him. God is love; don't try to judge him. God is love; don't doubt his motivation. God is love; obey him.