

God is Partially in Control – Part 2

I was once at a Bible Study where one of the members remarked how God was with him that morning on his way to work. He had been running late and began to pray for green traffic lights. Sure enough, most of the lights he encountered were green, and he was able to make it to work on time.

I openly questioned his interpretation of the events to the group and was surprised to hear them agree with him. God somehow altered the lights to allow the man to make up lost time. I continued to argue, saying that would mean that other drivers, traveling in other directions would encounter more red lights and might run late. Consequently, God's intervention on behalf of one person would negatively influence others. They shrugged as if to say, "So what?"

In Christendom, it is almost universally accepted that God answers prayers. How He answers them is open to debate.

I believe most rational people would understand that it is neither possible nor wise for God to answer all prayers. If two men pray for the same woman's hand in marriage, it is impossible for God to answer the requests of both men. Because of free will, she would have a say in the matter. It would also be unwise for God to answer prayers asked in anger, as someone might pray for another to die or to become ill.

Consequently, God cannot and should not – at least in human understanding – answer all prayers. Many believe though that God does answer some prayers and selectively intervenes at critical moments in our lives. This understanding allows God to be in control (at least partially or selectively) and for free will to exist. It also leads to a belief that God does answer all prayers but sometimes the answer is "No."

In addition, it releases Him from culpability for acts of evil, personal failures, and other negative happenings in our lives. Tragedy may strike but God neither created nor directed that tragedy. In this Christian perspective, all manifestations of evil emanate not from God but from Satan. Good things are the blessings of God; bad things are the result of Satan.

This belief is probably the most satisfying in relation to God's influence on our lives. It allows us to elevate God above the daily suffering that we endure. Like my friend driving to work, it permits us to credit and praise Him even in the most minute positive aspects

of our lives. And like my friend, we can blame a series of red lights rendering us late for work the very next day on Satan or the devil.

However, this belief cannot reconcile God's interference in our lives with the negative consequences in other's lives. If God actually intervened and manipulated traffic lights to allow my friend to save time, then God's actions would influence other people traveling in different directions. God cannot selectively assist one person in acquiring employment, earning a promotion, finding a spouse, or stumbling into a financial windfall without somehow influencing others.

We also do not require Satan or any evil force in this line of thinking. Instead of blaming Satan for our inability to secure a new job or a promotion, we could simply think of setbacks as times when God's favor went to someone else.

But if we accept the fact that God selectively intervenes we stumble upon an unanswerable question: Why does God intervene at certain times and not others? Why are some accident victims left paralyzed while others walk away? Why did one woman escape rape while another was not as fortunate? Why is one happy couple the parents of a beautiful, healthy baby while across the street another couple's baby is tragically born with serious birth defects?

In each of the aforementioned questions, why did God choose not to grant these people the "green lights" in life? It is impossible to say.

People of faith resign themselves to accept the many challenges in life, with the confidence that whatever their fate, God knows what He is doing and what is best for them. However, even when we understand God to be in partial – or selective – control of our lives, we cannot reach any satisfying conclusions or better understand His actions.

Previous article: [God is in Total Control – Part 1](#)

Next article: [God is Not in Control – Part 3](#)