

## GOD'S NOT M.I.A., NOR IS HIS GOODNESS

### I. Various Scriptures

**A. Let's do something really unorthodox this morning, let's begin with a Doxology. While a Benediction is a blessing conferred on God's people, a Doxology is a word or song of praise lifted up to God. Borrowing from Isaiah and Job, Paul's doxology in Romans 11:33-36 (NIV) goes like this: **33** *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out!* **34** *"Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor?"* **35** *"Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?"* **36** *For from Him and through Him and for Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen.***

**B. If you're a believer in Christ. If you're even half aware of what's going on in the world around you. If the trials and fiery ordeals and woes of this life, particularly this past year and continuing, have not tested your faith, maybe you should be nominated for sainthood. Most of you've read the prayer lists, have mourned the loss of a loved one, and have sought to minister to those afflicted...**

**C. What I want to convey is that God is not M.I.A. (*missing in action*) and all that He is doing and allowing is flowing from His sovereign will and providential goodness. He's fully in charge and His lovingkindness is still better than life. Listen to God's Word:**

**1) Psalm 115:1-3 (NIV) reminds us *Who is in charge*: **1** *Not to us, LORD, not to us but to Your name be the glory, because of Your love and faithfulness.* **2** *Why do the nations say, "Where is their God?"* **3** *Our God is in heaven; He does whatever pleases Him.***

**2) Psalm 31:19 (ESV) reminds us of the character of the One in charge: **19** *Oh, how abundant is Your goodness, which You have stored up for those who fear You and worked for those who take refuge in You, in the sight of the children of mankind!***

**3) Jesus affirms it best in Matthew 10:29-31 (NLT): **29** *What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it.* **30** *And the very hairs on your head are all numbered.* **31** *So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.***

**D. Jerry Bridges, in his book, Trusting God, writes: "No plan of God's can be thwarted; when He acts, no one can reverse it; no one can hold back His hand or bring Him to account for His actions. God does as He pleases, only as He pleases, and works out every event to bring about the accomplishment of His will. Such a bare unqualified statement of the sovereignty of God would terrify us if that were all we knew about God. But God is not only sovereign, He is perfect in love and infinite in wisdom."**

**E. The great preacher Charles Spurgeon simply said: "When you go through a trial, the sovereignty of God is the pillow upon which you lay your head." (As believers, we can lay our head on that pillow because it's embroidered with Romans 8:28...)**

**F. The last Sunday in December I read to you the names of nearly 50 people we lost in 2020. I know of 13 more since 2021 began. Two of these brothers were friends of mine. Rodger Harlow was elder in this church. Many of us are grieving...**

**G. We know people who are sick. Others afraid of getting sick. We know people who've been hurt economically. We know folks who believe these are the end times. Then we hear of high profile preachers whose false prophecies are epic fails. (How's this for a book title: False Prophets Making Profits Off False Prophecies!) God help the Church!**

**H. You may have questions! You may be worried! Afraid! You may wonder who's in charge. Who's in charge in Washington DC? Who's in charge in Ohio? Who's in charge of vaccine distribution? When I can see my loved one in the nursing home? Do I really need two masks? So is God missing in action? Has He abandoned we His people? NO!**

**I. Lamentations 3:37-40 (NLT) may prove instructive: *37 Who can command things to happen without the Lord's permission? 38 Does not the Most High send both calamity and good? 39 Then why should we, mere humans, complain when we are punished for our sins? 40 Instead, let us test and examine our ways. Let us turn back to the LORD. (In terms of whereabouts, be concerned with the location of your very own heart!)***

**J. Pastor Don Fortner of Grace Baptist Church in Danville, KY, passed away last year. He said this: "As a wise, skilled pharmacist mixes medicine, our heavenly Father wisely mixes exactly the right measure of bitter things and sweet, to do us good. Too much joy would intoxicate us. Too much misery would drive us to despair. Too much sorrow would crush us. Too much suffering would break our spirits. Too much pleasure would ruin us. Too much defeat would discourage us. Too much success would puff us up. Too much failure would keep us from doing anything. Too much criticism would harden us. Too much praise would exalt us. Our great God knows exactly what we need. His Providence is wisely designed and sovereignly sent for our good!"**

**K. So with our eyes lifted up to heaven; with hands over our mouths; with our hearts bowed before God; we humbly seek our Lord's face. We ask for forgiveness where we've sinned. We ask for wisdom and guidance going forward. We embrace the Words He actually spoke, the words penned in the 66 books. We place our trust in Him who loved us so much He sent His One and only Son to rescue us from sin and death and eternal damnation. God is not M.I.A nor is His goodness!**

**L. The ultimate proof of God's love is the cross. There, His wrath was unleashed, His love was unveiled, our atonement secured, and His forgiveness bestowed. Therefore let His Peace rule in your hearts. Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's! God's got us!**

**\* Romans 11:33-36 (NIV) one more time: *33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out! 34 "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor?" 35 "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?" 36 For from Him and through Him and for Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen.***

**\* Close with Prayer...**

## **Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff**

### **Romans 11:33-36 (NIV)**

**33** Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out! **34** “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor?” **35** “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?” **36** For from Him and through Him and for Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen.

### **Psalm 115:1-3 (NIV)**

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### **Psalm 31:19 (ESV)**

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### **Quote by Jerry Bridges**

"No plan of God's can be thwarted; when He acts, no one can reverse it; no one can hold back His hand or bring Him to account for His actions. God does as He pleases, only as He pleases, and works out every event to bring about the accomplishment of His will. Such a bare unqualified statement of the sovereignty of God would terrify us if that were all we knew about God. But God is not only sovereign, He is perfect in love and infinite in wisdom."

- Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God*, NavPress, p. 45.

### **Quote by Charles Spurgeon**

"When you go through a trial, the sovereignty of God is the pillow upon which you lay your head."

### **Lamentations 3:37-40 (NLT)**

**37** Who can command things to happen without the Lord's permission? **38** Does not the Most High send both calamity and good? **39** Then why should we, mere humans, complain when we are punished for our sins? **40** Instead, let us test and examine our ways. Let us turn back to the LORD.

### **Quote by Don Fortner**

"As a wise, skilled pharmacist mixes medicine, our heavenly Father wisely mixes exactly the right measure of bitter things and sweet, to do us good. Too much joy would intoxicate us. Too much misery would drive us to despair. Too much sorrow would crush us. Too much suffering would break our spirits. Too much pleasure would ruin us. Too much defeat would discourage us. Too much success would puff us up. Too much failure would keep us from doing anything. Too much criticism would harden us. Too much praise would exalt us. Our great God knows exactly what we need. His Providence is wisely designed and sovereignly sent for our good!"

- Pastor Dan Fortner (1950-2020), Late Pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Danville, KY.

### **[Bonus Rations for Further Nourishment](#)**

**Life is Hard. God is Good. - John Piper**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJlhYihWlcs>**

**Expect Providence to Surprise You: Learning the Rhythm of God's Ways - David Mathis**

**<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/expect-providence-to-surprise-you>**

**"God You're So Good" - Kristian Stanfill and Melodie Malone**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAHplkqyL0g>**

**An Evening with Vaneetha & Friends - (Profound & Powerful; Thanks Ed Kaiser!)**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ycdQptKSpnl>**

**Before You Tweet Criticism: Six Considerations - John Piper**

**<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/before-you-tweet-criticism-six-considerations>**

**Why Does It Seem Like the Smartest People Are the Ones Who Reject Christianity?**

**- Dr. Michael Kruger, Professor of NT, Reformed Theological Seminary**

**<https://www.michaelkruger.com/why-does-it-seem-like-the-smartest-people-are-the-ones-who-reject-christianity/>**

### **[Psalm 75:1-7 \(NIV\)](#)**

**1** We praise You, God, we praise You, for Your Name is near; people tell of Your wonderful deeds. **2** You say, "I choose the appointed time; it is I who judge with equity. **3** When the earth and all its people quake, it is I who hold its pillars firm. **4** To the arrogant I say, 'Boast no more,' and to the wicked, 'Do not lift up your horns. **5** Do not lift your horns against heaven; do not speak so defiantly.'" **6** No one from the east or the west or from the desert can exalt themselves. **7** It is God who judges: He brings one down, He exalts another.

### **[Psalm 146:3-6 \(NIV\)](#)**

**3** Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save. **4** When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing. **5** Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their

God. **6** He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—He remains faithful forever.

### **Proverbs 16:33 (NLT)**

**33** We may throw the dice, but the LORD determines how they fall.

### **Isaiah 40:12-14 (NASB)**

**12** Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and measured the heavens with a span, and calculated the dust of the earth with a measure, and weighed the mountains in a balance and the hills in a pair of scales? **13** Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counselor has informed Him? **14** With whom did He consult and who gave Him understanding? And who taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge, and informed Him of the way of understanding?

### **Isaiah 45:5-7 (ESV)**

**5** I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides Me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know Me, **6** that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides Me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. **7** I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things.

### **Job 41:11 (NASB)**

**11** Who has been first to give to Me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the entire heaven is Mine.

### **Job 43:1-6 (NIV)**

**1** Then Job replied to the LORD: **2** “I know that You can do all things; no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. **3** You asked, ‘Who is this that obscures My plans without knowledge?’ Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. **4** “You said, ‘Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer Me.’ **5** My ears had heard of You but now my eyes have seen You. **6** Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

### **Daniel 2:20-22 (NASB)**

**20** Daniel said, “May the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. **21** It is He who changes the times and the periods; He removes kings and appoints kings; He gives wisdom to wise men, and knowledge to people of understanding. **22** It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him.

### **Daniel 4:17 (NIV)**

**17** The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone He wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people.

### **Daniel 4:34-35 (ESV)**

**34** At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored Him who lives forever, for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation; **35** all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and He does according to His will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand or say to Him, “What have You done?”

#### **Psalm 34:8 (ESV)**

**8** Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

#### **Psalm 86:4-5 (ESV)**

**4** Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. **5** For You, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon You.

#### **Psalm 100:4-5 (ESV)**

**4** Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise! Give thanks to Him; bless His name! **5** For the LORD is good; His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations.

#### **Psalm 106:1 (ESV)**

**1** Praise the LORD! Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever!

#### **Psalm 107:1-3 (ESV)**

**1** Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever!  
**2** Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from trouble **3** and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

#### **Psalm 119:68 (ESV)**

**68** You are good and do good; teach me Your statutes.

#### **Psalm 135:3 (ESV)**

**3** Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; sing to His name, for it is pleasant!

#### **Psalm 145:7-9 (ESV)**

**7** They shall pour forth the fame of Your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. **8** The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. **9** The LORD is good to all, and His mercy is over all that He has made.

#### **Ezra 3:10-11 (NIV)**

**10** When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the LORD, as prescribed by David king of Israel. **11** With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: “He is good; His love toward Israel endures

forever.” And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

### **Nahum 1:7 (ESV)**

**7** The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; He knows those who take refuge in Him.

### **Isaiah 41:9-10 (NIV)**

**9** I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, ‘You are my servant’; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. **10** So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

### **Quote by R.C. Sproul**

"If there is one maverick molecule in all the universe, then God is not sovereign. And if God is not sovereign, He is not God."

### **Quote by Charles Spurgeon**

"I believe that every particle of dust that dances in the sunbeam does not move an atom more or less than God wishes – that every particle of spray that dashes against the steamboat has its orbit, as well as the sun in the heavens – that the chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as the stars in their courses. The creeping of an aphid over the rosebud is as much fixed as the march of the devastating pestilence – the fall of leaves from a poplar is as fully ordained as the tumbling of an avalanche. He who believes in God must believe this truth. There is no standing point between this and Atheism. There is no halfway between an Almighty God, who works all things according to the good pleasure of His will, and no God at all!"

### **Quote by A.W. Pink**

"The sovereignty of God may be defined as the exercise of His supremacy. Being infinitely elevated above the highest creature, He is the Most High, Lord of heaven and earth. Subject to none, influenced by none, absolutely independent; God does as He pleases, only as He pleases always as He pleases. None can thwart Him, none can hinder Him."

- A.W. Pink, *The Attributes of God*, Chapter 6.

### **Quote by Jerry Bridges**

"This is the essence of God’s sovereignty; His absolute independence to do as He pleases and His absolute control over the actions of all His creatures. No creature, person, or empire can either thwart His will or act outside the bounds of His will."

- Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God*, NavPress, p. 36.

### **Quote by Jerry Bridges**

"Nothing can be more consoling to the man of God, than the conviction that the Lord who made the world governs the world; and that every event, great and small,

prosperous and adverse, is under the absolute disposal of Him who doth all things well, and who regulates all things for the good of His people."

- Jerry Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness*, p. 214.

### **Quote by Margaret Clarkson**

"The sovereignty of God is the one impregnable rock to which the suffering human heart must cling. The circumstances surrounding our lives are no accident; they may be the work of evil, but that evil is held firmly within the mighty hand of our sovereign God... All evil is subject to Him, and evil cannot touch His children unless He permits it. God is the Lord of human history and of the personal history of every member of His redeemed family."

- Margaret Clarkson, *Grace Grows Best in Winter*, Eerdmans, p.p. 40, 41.

### **Quote by Joni Eareckson Tada**

"Nothing is a surprise to God; nothing is a setback to His plans; nothing can thwart His purposes; and nothing is beyond His control. His sovereignty is absolute. Everything that happens is uniquely ordained by God. Sovereignty is a weighty thing to ascribe to the nature and character of God. Yet if He were not sovereign, He would not be God. The Bible is clear that God is in control of everything that happens."

- Joni Eareckson Tada, *Is God Really in Control?*, p. 1.

### **Quote by Alan Redpath**

"There is nothing – no circumstance, no trouble, no testing – that can ever touch me until, first of all, it has gone past God and past Christ right through to me. If it has come that far, it has come with a great purpose, which I may not understand at the moment. But as I refuse to become panicky, as I lift up my eyes to Him and accept it as coming from the throne of God for some great purpose of blessing to my own heart, no sorrow will ever disturb me, no trial will ever disarm me, no circumstance will cause me to fret – for I shall rest in the joy of what my Lord is! That is the rest of victory!"

### **Quote by A.W. Pink**

"Divine sovereignty is not the sovereignty of a tyrannical Despot, but the exercised pleasure of One who is infinitely wise and good! Because God is infinitely wise He cannot err, and because He is infinitely righteous He will not do wrong. Here then is the preciousness of this truth. The mere fact itself that God's will is irresistible and irreversible fills me with fear, but once I realize that God wills only that which is good, my heart is made to rejoice."

### **Quote by A.W. Tozer**

"How completely satisfying to turn from our limitations to a God who has none. Eternal years lie in His heart. For Him time does not pass, it remains; and those who are in Christ share with Him all the riches of limitless time and endless years. God never hurries. There are no deadlines against which He must work. Only to know this is to quiet our spirits and relax our nerves. For those out of Christ, time is a devouring beast."

### **Quote by R.C. Sproul**

"There is not one piece of cosmic dust that is outside the scope of God's sovereign providence."

### **Quote by Athanasius**

"For God is good - or rather, of all goodness He is the Fountainhead."

### **Quote by Augustine**

"God is always trying to give good things to us, but our hands are too full to receive them."

### **Quote by Wayne Grudem**

"What is 'good?' 'Good' is what God approves. We may ask then, why is what God approves good? We must answer, 'Because He approves it.' That is to say, there is no higher standard of goodness than God's own character and His approval of whatever is consistent with that character... God's mercy is His goodness toward those in distress, His grace is His goodness toward those who deserve only punishment, and His patience is His goodness toward those who continue to sin over a period of time."

- Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p.p. 197-198.

## **God's Sovereignty vs Fatalism vs Determinism**

### **What is Fatalism? What is Determinism?**

By S. Michael Houdmann

<https://www.gotquestions.org/fatalism.html>

Question: *"What is fatalism? What is determinism?"*

Answer: Let's begin with some general definitions of fatalism and determinism and some related terms:

**Determinism:** The view that every event has a cause and that everything in the universe is absolutely dependent on and governed by causal laws. Determinism is related to fatalism, since determinists believe that all events, including human actions, are caused by something else. Determinism is typically thought to be incompatible with free will.

**Fatalism:** The belief that "what will be will be," since all past, present, and future events have already been predetermined by God or another all-powerful force, such as "Fate." In religion, fatalism may sometimes be confused with predestination, the doctrine that God chooses those who go to heaven before they are even born. It's important to note that the Bible teaches predestination but not to the exclusion of free will; thus, the Bible does not teach fatalism.

**Free will:** The freedom of choice or self-determination that human beings possess; those who believe in free will believe that, given any situation, a person could have

done other than what he did. Philosophers have argued that free will is incompatible with determinism and fatalism.

Indeterminism: The view that there are events that do not have any cause; many proponents of free will believe that acts of choice are independent of any physiological or psychological cause.

Theological fatalism or theological determinism is an attempt to demonstrate a logical contradiction between an omniscient God and free will, where free will is defined as the ability to choose between alternatives. In this it is similar in purpose to the conundrum “Can an omnipotent God make a rock too heavy for Him to lift?”

Theological fatalism’s premises are stated as follows: God is omniscient. Since God is omniscient, God has infallible foreknowledge. If God has infallible foreknowledge that tomorrow you will engage in an event (mow the lawn), then you must invariably engage in that event (mowing the lawn).

Therefore, according to theological fatalism, free will is not possible, since you have no alternative except to participate in the event (mow the lawn). If you do not mow the lawn, then God is not omniscient. But if you mow the lawn, then you don’t have free will, on account of your inability to choose an alternative.

Here is an opposing argument to theological fatalism: God is omniscient. Since God is omniscient, He is also infallible. If God has infallible foreknowledge that tomorrow you will mow the lawn, then you will freely choose to do so, not out of obligation or lack of choice. You still have free will to mow the lawn or not mow it; God merely knows your choice before you make it. You are not obliged to mow the lawn tomorrow any more than you are to play tennis or bake a cake. If you were going to change your mind, God would have seen that also, so you still have free will in all matters. Also, you will still make the same choices (exercising your free will), even if God chose not to see the future. God’s passive foreknowledge of the future does not alter your free will.

There is a vast difference between fatalism, chance (or fortune), and predestination.

Fatalism teaches that there is a blind, impersonal force over which no one has control—not even God—and that events are swept along by this blind, purposeless power.

Chance (or fortune) is a capricious force that supposedly causes things to happen “luckily,” without any control or direction by God. In a world ruled by chance, God can foresee what will happen, but that is all. Everything depends on mere luck. And if the advocate of chance is asked why or how things come to pass, he has no reply except to shrug and say, “It just happened.”

Predestination, the doctrine of the Bible, says that God has a purpose and He is working all things out according to His own will and purpose (Ephesians 1:11; Daniel 4:35; Isaiah 14:24; 46:10). Predestination teaches that God neither does nor permits

anything except what serves His purpose (Psalm 33:11). This means that GOD IS the SOVEREIGN of the world, the One who does all things as He wills.

Those who blindly believe que sera, sera, or “whatever will be, will be,” are as wrong as the advocates of chance. It is true that events are certain, but only so because of the sovereign God who fulfills His own decrees.

Serious students of the Bible do not believe that things “just happen.” Christians reject fatalism and godless determinism. Rather, they understand that a wise, holy, good, and sovereign God has control of every detail of life (Matthew 10:29–30). The man who does not really want God to have this control or who despises the truth of God’s sovereignty does not love God and does not want God in his life. But God is sovereign, and He cannot deny Himself.

Recommended Resource: Chosen But Free, revised edition: A Balanced View of God's Sovereignty and Free Will by Norm Geisler and The Potter's Freedom by James White.

- While he is not the author of every article on GotQuestions.org, for citation purposes, you may reference our CEO, S. Michael Houdmann.

### **Fatalism vs The Sovereignty Of God**

Pastor Jim Davey, Faith Alliance Church, Kalispell, Montana

I thought that I should post the difference between Fatalism & The Sovereignty Of God here so that it is available if someone wants it. As I mentioned in my sermon, knowing the difference between the two is crucial. Fatalism is negative while sovereignty is positive. Fatalism will take us away from God while sovereignty will bring us closer to God.

Fatalism = fate determines what happens to each of us

- random, arbitrary
- impersonal (nobody behind events; they just happen)
- no purpose (things happen without reason)
- cruel (may or may not deserve what happens to us)
- creates resignation (results in thinking, Why bother? Nothing can be done. What is going to happen is going to happen.)

Sovereignty of God = God determines what happens to each of us

- selective, specific
- personal (controlled by God)
- purposeful (a part of both God's individual & collective plans)
- loving, just (people get what they deserve)
- creates hope/anticipation (results in thinking, How is God going to use this in my life?)

- Pastor Jim Davey's Blog, Faith Alliance Church, Kalispell, Montana, Monday, May 2, 2011. To read more, go to: <http://faithalliancechurchkalispell.blogspot.com/2011/05/fatalism-vs-sovereignty-of-god.html>