

Not Against Flesh & Blood

A Seven Week Series on Spiritual Warfare
Week Two: Cruciformed Sovereignty

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood,
but against the rulers, against the authorities,
against the powers of this dark world and against
the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

Paul, Ephesians 6:12 NIV

Creation & Chaos—*A Review*

- God created out of love, inviting his creation in on the divine character and community;
- Sometime in the primordial cosmos, angelic beings rebelled against God's good order;
- Chaos was mixed with the creative process, sin and rebellion worked its way into humanity;
- God takes the initiative and steps in to judge and redeem his “fallen” creation;
- Jesus inaugurates the Kingdom that drives out Satan, and *will* “weed” out evil in the world.

“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.”

1 John 3:8b

Is God Sovereign?

- If God is good, then why is there evil in the world? (problem of evil)
- Isn't God omniscient (all-knowing)?
- Does God know the future? (determinism)
- If so, do we truly have free will?
- Is God “above” or outside of time?
- Is God really in “control” of all things?

The Blueprint Worldview

- “Everything happens for a reason.”
- God *is* in control (i.e. caused or allowed it)
- God is “above” time (e.g. watching the parade)
- God knows the future as if it's already done
- God is *immutable* or doesn't change
- God's “will” is about discovering *the* way to go
- Evil happens because of our own sin, faithlessness, or because God wanted it

Hebrews 1:1-3 NIV

1 In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,

2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.

3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

Paul, Colossians 1:15-18 NIV

15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. **16** For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **18** And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

The Warfare Worldview

- The world is mysteriously complex
- War of the wills (divine, angelic and human)
- Every good and perfect gift is from God
- Since God *always* looks like Jesus... evil (pain, death, violence, etc.) is *never* God's will
- God has entered into time and accommodates himself to the free will decisions of creation
- God sees/knows the future as settled certainties and unsettled possibilities (Master Chess-Player)

The World That God (Love) Created

- Love and holiness must be freely chosen;
- Love involves risk—God risks, we risk;
- Love and freedom means moral responsibility;
- Ability to do good is roughly proportionate to an agent's ability to do evil;
- Freedom must be, within limits, irrevocable;
- Capacity/opportunity to choose love is limited.

“And having disarmed the powers and authorities,
he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing
over them by the cross.”

Paul, Colossians 2:15 NIV

“The cross refutes the traditional notion that omnipotence means God always gets his way. Rather, the cross reveals God’s omnipotence as a power that empowers others—to the point of giving others the ability, if they so choose, to nail him to the cross. The cross reveals that God’s omnipotence is displayed in self-sacrificial love, *not sheer might.*”

Greg Boyd, *Is God To Blame?* (pg.49)

“God conquers sin and the devil not by a sovereign decree but by a wise and humble submission to crucifixion. In doing this, the cross reveals that God’s omnipotence is not primarily about control but about his compelling love. God conquers evil and wins the heart of people by self-sacrificial love, not by coercive force.”

Greg Boyd, *Is God To Blame?* (pg.49)

Paul, 1 Corinthians 1:17-18 NIV

17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. **18** For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:19-21 NIV

19 For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." **20** Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? **21** For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

Cross-like Sovereignty

- God's sovereignty looks like the cross, hence “cruci-formed” sovereignty!
- “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father [God].” Jesus, Jn 14:9 NIV
- The Father doesn't manipulate, coerce, or do evil (human or “natural”) to get his way
- Instead, God's Kingdom advances through submissive wills (human & angelic) yielding to his love—warfare in the way of Christ

Matthew 8:23-27 NIV

23 Then he [Jesus] got into the boat and his disciples followed him. **24** Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. **25** The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!”

26 He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

27 The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”

Matthew 8:28-31 NIV

28 When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way.

29 “What do you want with us, Son of God?” they shouted. “Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?”

30 Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. **31** The demons begged Jesus, “If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs.”

Matthew 8:32-34 NIV

32 He said to them, “Go!” So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water. **33** Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men.

34 Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region.

* See Revelation 18:2-5; 19:19-21

Paul, Romans 8:28,31-32 NLT

28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

31 What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? **32** Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else?

Romans 8:35-37 NLT

35 Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? **36** (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.")

37 No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

Romans 8:38-39 NLT

38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. **39** No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Cruciformed Sovereignty—*A Summary*

- Vastness and complexity of a war-torn creation is a mystery, but God's will and character are not
- Evil blinds/is blinded to God's wisdom and character, the Jesus way (cross) is “foolishness”
- God is infinitely able to bring good out of evil
- The crucifixion and resurrection are proof that God's *cruciformed* sovereignty defeats evil!
- We can shape the future—while the ultimate end is certain, the way we reach the end is open

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