

Responding to the New Atheists' attacks on the God of the Old Testament-26: "Child Abuse" – The Perfect Goodness of God Euthyphro Dilemma.6

The Euthyphro dilemma recast into the Abraham-Yahweh-Isaac dilemma is a false dilemma. Each of the horn of the dilemma is false: 1) is something good because God wills it— is the command to kill Isaac good simply because God wills it? or 2) God wills it because it is good—commanding Abraham to kill Isaac is a good thing therefore God commands it. The solution is to split the first horn for a third horn, namely God wills it because the good is grounded in the very nature of God Himself.

The goodness of God is not *simply* some *act* of grace or mercy one receives from Him. It goes much deeper into the very *Esse* of God Himself. God is an absolutely perfect being and as such He is Good. "God" is identical with perfect goodness. It is not something He does as much as it is something He essentially is. The goodness of God is a metaphysical concept. To think of the goodness of God as something that He does on occasion is to misdescribe what good means. God is ultimate goodness whether He graces us out or administers divine discipline. God as God is good in the sense of being an absolutely perfect being. Goodness applies to all of His attributes. In other words, His perfect goodness is identical with His perfect power. This means that wherever there is perfect power there is perfect goodness. Because the goodness of God is connected to all of *Esse* and all of His attributes, then regardless of which attribute is dominant in our lives, it is perfectly good.

God never intended Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham was not a divine-command theorist who believed that simply God commanding something made it right. Abraham firmly believed that God was essentially good and in the test held tenaciously to four propositions: 1) God has commanded me to kill my son; 2) God is intrinsically good and altogether worthy of my obedience; 3) for me to kill my son, even as a sacrifice to God, would be horribly wrong; and 4) God is good and will not allow me to do something horribly wrong. Abraham believed in all of these propositions as he trusted God *unconditionally!* Where is the evidence of this trust? "The Lord will Provide!"

Genesis 22:14 And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen (KJV).

Genesis 22:14 And Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided." (NAS)

Jehovahjireh! That name was intended to blazon out in triumphant what he had been steadfastly, silently, saying to himself *for three whole days*. For further evidence of his trust in God's goodness, look at the exchange between the boy and his father:

Genesis 22:7-8, Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8 Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."

Because Abraham believed in the goodness of God, he believed in the faithfulness of God. Had Abraham believed that goodness was some arbitrary act of God's will, then Abraham would not have this confidence. Who knows, maybe God will change His will? Of course, it would be incoherent for him to believe that there was some good that God was subject to that dictated that Abraham sacrifice his son. Abraham understood the goodness of God, and this is inextricably connected with the goodness *in* God Himself.

Goodness! What a wonderful way to understand God. To know that regardless of what testing and difficulties we experience, they are all sent by the goodness of God. A real goodness that perhaps we do not see at the moment. However, we not only have the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, we have wonderful example of Abraham, the father of faith, to inspire us. We also have Job. Consider what Job had to endure before He realized the goodness of God. What will it take for us to recognize that He is good and does nothing but good in all dealings with us?



Pastor Don