

ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH PRESENTS

CAN I PUSH IT?

LIVE ON YOUTUBE 

TUESDAY
7:00 PM ET

EPISODE 3:
"THEODICY PT.2"
APRIL 28, 2020

WITH
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PREFACE

The most dangerous people are those people who put God in a box. They are like Job's friends who strictly believe in Retributive Justice (we sin - God punishes).

INTRO

Most debated issue in the history of Christianity is Theodicy: Attempt to defend the divine character of God in the midst of physical and moral evil

Theodicy presents itself in questions such as: Why do bad things happen to good people? Why does a loving God allow evil? Is COVID-19 an act of God?

Theodicy discussion invites us to locate ourselves on the spectrum between 2 positions:



These schools of thought invite the questions:

- 1. How much is known/ordained by God?*
- 2. How much is determined by our choices?*

DEFINITIONS

Calvinism: All things are foreknown and foreordained. Nothing happens outside of the will of God.

Process Theology: Free will is at work and nothing is predestined. Process is shaped by God's will interacting with our will.

Illustration Exercise - a child is killed by a drunk driver - both positions on the spectrum have strengths, weaknesses, challenges, implications

PART 1

The Nature of God

Ask yourself these questions:

- 1) When you use the term God what do you mean?
- 2) What makes God, God?

Pastor Wesley's 5 Attributes of God:

- 1) **Holy:** God is perfectly pure; utterly different than anything in humanity; incapable of sin or error
- 2) **Just:** Everything God does has divine purpose that is good even if it doesn't feel good or fair to us
- 3) **Loving:** Nothing on earth mirrors God's love which is why there is no English derivative for the Greek term *Agape* love
- 4) **Omnipotent:** God is capable of doing anything God chooses to do
- 5) **Omniscient:** God knows everything; including our future

...Now let's take a look at how the two positions understand the nature of God...

PART 2

CALVINIST POSITION

Suggests that we should have faith in God and trust that God is in control of everything

Questions:

- 1) If God is in control of everything do you have any free choices?
- 2) Can a loving God be responsible for evil?

ARGUMENT:	Calvinist would argue that even evil can be used for God's purpose
RESPONSE:	This position is challenged by slavery, the holocaust, and other tragedies that seem to have no productive outcome
OUTCOME:	Calvinist position forces you to have a particular understanding of attribute #3: love. To be on this side of the spectrum you have to believe in a tough love. God's tough love allows things to happen, but these events make us stronger, wiser, and grow us into better versions of ourselves.

PART 3

PROCESS THEOLOGY POSITION

Suggests that in scripture we see God interacting with the decisions of humanity:

- Numbers 14 - Disobedient children of Israel didn't enter the promised land that God willed them to have
- Jonah - Jonah chooses not to go to Nineveh so God has to intervene with the large fish

ARGUMENT:	Process theologians would argue that God adapts to human decision and disobedience
RESPONSE:	This position is challenged by the notion that if God is adapting than is God really fully aware of the future

OUTCOME:

The process theology position forces you to have a particular understanding of attribute #5: omniscience. To be on this side of the spectrum you have to believe in a God who may not know everything, but is always open to interacting with us rather than forcing his will on us.

Pastor Wesley says that he is a process theologian because even though he is a broken creature God's love still chooses to interact with him.

Reflection Questions:

- Which position do you take?
- Where on the spectrum do you fall?
- How do you reconcile the various attributes of God with your understanding of theodicy?
- Do you have additional attributes of God not found on the above list?

REMEMBER OUR JOB IS NOT TO TELL YOU WHAT TO THINK, JUST TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU'RE THINKING.

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- Join us for next week's episode on Women in Ministry**
- **How do we dismantle patriarchy in the Black church without destroying the Black church?**