**Divine omnipotence**

We notice first that omnipotence does not include the impossible. The condition of impossibility has limitations even with humans. For example, we can agree that it is impossible for humans to fly. But humans can fly if they are inside an airplane. Similarly, we cannot see the far side of the moon. But we could, if we were in a spacecraft. We understand these conditions of possibility/impossibility because of our human experience.

As with humans, possibility and impossibility have conditions with God. For instance, God does not perform absurd tasks, nor is He ever involved in nonsense. God cannot create a four-sided triangle or make ice that is not frozen. To suggest that God should do that which is intrinsically impossible is to speak in absurdities. To demand the absence of pain in a world that operates under natural law is absurd. To claim that, because God allows pain, He is neither good nor omnipotent is likewise absurd. Begging the question of God’s goodness is no proof against His existence or His power or His love.

The universe operates according to natural laws; humans are subject to those laws, including suffering. Do the laws of nature, which operate against us in spite of prayer, disprove God’s omnipotence? Of course not. God could cause nature to obey the wishes of any person. But that would cause nature to work against most people. We see that it is absurd to ask or expect that God would intervene in all cases for humans against nature or to satisfy one human’s needs or wishes at the expense of other humans.

The free will of human beings demonstrates the necessary limitation of God’s omnipotence. God cannot grant and at the same time withhold free moral agency. What if God corrected the abuse of free will in every case? What if a knife became rubber if used as a weapon? What if air refused to carry lies or insults? We see that the

42

God created the world, and thus it belongs to Him (Deut. 10:14; Job 9:5-10; Psalm 89:11; 1 Cor. 10:26). He is in complete control of all things in the world (1 Chron. 29:11-12; Psalm 24:1; 115:3; 135:6). God has an eternal plan for the world (Eccl. 3:14; Isa. 14:24-27). God’s will and purpose are fulfilled through Jesus Christ and His church (Eph. 1:9-10; 3:10-11).

**How God Provides**

The spectrum of Divine Providence includes the universe (the earth in particular), human beings and their relationships, and the affairs of nations. God is involved in all of His creation because of his benevolent and almighty nature. Here it should be noted that some people believe that all events are accidents of nature and that God is not in control of anything. At the other extreme are those who believe that God controls and predetermines everything (Calvinism) and even uses miracles to demonstrate His power and will (Pentecostalism). Here are some of the more popular views of divine providence: 1) God causes all things (Predestination); 2) God limits His control (Open Theology); 3) God created a universe in which man’s will agrees with God’s will (Monism); 4) God directs all things but allows free will (Arminianism). This seminar will present the view that God operates providentially in the world today by means of natural law. We shall also see that God cares for His own people in a way that has been called Special Providence.

3