How come whenever something good happens I am supposed to thank God, but when something bad happens, I can't blame Him?

I can try and answer that in theory. But when it comes to the heart, this is a great wound that can only be healed through prayer. When it comes to suffering and the depths of agony that many people endure, there is no simple answer. I need to make that clear right off the bat.

And yet, we need to try. First, crying out to God in the middle of pain is not prohibited at all. In fact, there is an entire book of the Bible consisting of the Chosen People's lament to a God who seems impassive to human suffering. Many of the Psalms were written in tears and confusion and frustration. If you have ever prayed like that, you most likely know that these can be the most genuine conversations with God we can have. God values honesty; this includes honesty in prayer. God isn't interested in hearing us tell Him how great He is when what is really in our hearts are questions and tears.

At the same time, why do we need to thank God for good and not blame Him for evil? Some atheists will claim that this idea is just "clever marketing" on the part of the "God people" to get God off the hook. He has to be praised and thanked but never blamed. But this isn't our way of "defending" God's fragile ego. This is simply being accurate. God is good. More precisely, God is Goodness Itself. All of our notions of "good" come from Him. In fact, the degree to which a thing conforms to God is the level of "goodness" it has. The degree to which it is a distortion of God or a lack of God is the level of evil.

Many of us make the mistake of thinking that when God created the world, he made good things and bad things. But remember, God is goodness itself. Evil cannot come from Him because evil can be defined as the degree to which a thing is a distortion of or lack of God. God did not make evil. He made all things good. This is why we thank and praise God for every good thing.

So what is evil? Evil is not a thing in the same way that good is a thing. A long time ago, a wise man was able to explain it in this way: God only created good. Evil is "merely" a distortion or privation of the good. So, eating food is a good thing. Eating too much or too little is a distortion of the good of eating food. In another example, blindness is not a "thing"; it is a privation of a natural good: sight. Paralysis is not a thing; it is a lack of a natural good: mobility.

So saying we may not blame God for bad things is not our way of walking on eggs shells around Him as if He couldn't take us telling Him the truth. It's just that, if we blame God for evil, we've got the wrong guy. He isn't, in fact, the one to blame.

Now, the question naturally arises: if evil doesn't come from God, then at least He could stop it if He wanted. Can't I just blame God for not putting an end to evil?

There is no easy answer to that question. But let me offer this brief one: Evil is the natural consequence of our being free. We can choose good or we can choose "not good". Unless God is going to constantly step in and only allow us to choose good, evil is always going to be possible. But if He did that, we would not actually be free. In God's wisdom, He allows us to choose wrong and do evil to each other for the sake of a greater good: that we also have the ability to love. We have the ability to hurt, but we also have the ability to heal.

In the midst of unbearable anguish and in the face of death, we may be tempted to doubt whether freedom is worth it. That question remains. Is it worth it? I don't know that I could ever "prove" that, but this is where faith enters. God says it is worth it, and so I trust Him and draw near to Him in my pain…and so can you.