

# WHY DO THE INNOCENT SUFFER

or

# WHY DOES EVIL EXIST?

(If God is a good and powerful God, how can He allow evil to exist? )

This is a real dilemma for many people, especially at times like 9/11, or the death of a child by a drunk driver.

## INTRODUCTION - TWO TYPES OF EVIL:

- A. Moral Evil: caused by man's rebellion against God and his cruelty to others (ex. murder)
- B. Natural Evil: result of natural phenomena inflicted on the innocent (ex. disease, earthquakes)

## I. FIRST OPTION: Evil Exists and God Doesn't

### A. Atheistic Reasoning

- 1) If God is good, He will destroy evil.
- 2) If God is all powerful, He can destroy evil.
- 3) But evil is not destroyed!
- 4) Therefore, there is not an all-good, all-powerful God

### B. Two Other Conclusions from This Reasoning

- 1) God is all powerful, but not all-good (sadistic)
- 2) God is all good, but not all powerful and incapable of stopping evil.

### C. False Assumption Made by This Reasoning

Evil would have to have been destroyed by now if God were capable.

### D. Correct Reasoning:

- 1) If God is all good, He will destroy evil
- 2) If God is all powerful, He can destroy evil
- 3) Evil is not yet destroyed
- 4) Therefore, evil will be destroyed one day (Rev. 20:10-15; 21:4; 22:3-5)

### E. Evil and God's Existence

- 1) If you assume evil, you must assume good
- 2) To define good and bad, you acknowledge a moral law
- 3) There can be no moral law without a law giver
- 4) Therefore, there must be God.

## II. SECOND OPTION: God Exists and Evil Doesn't

- A. To accept that evil doesn't exist, we must deny our own senses and personal experiences.
- B. Scientific investigation has monitored natural evil for centuries, predicting hurricanes, earthquakes, and tornadoes.
- C. The Bible acknowledges the existence of evil. (Judges 2:11-15; Psalm 5:4-5; 51:2-5; Galatians 5:19-21)

### III. THIRD OPTION: God Exists and Evil Exists

- A. Finitism: Evil is greater than God
  - 1) The fact that God has not defeated evil today does not eliminate His ability to do it later.
  - 2) The Bible declares God is Almighty (Omnipotent) (Rev. 19:6)
- B. Dualism: God and Evil and Co-eternal Opposites
  - 1) Major Premises
    - (a) Nothing can be the source of its opposite; i.e. light cannot be the source of darkness
    - (b) If God were the only source of all things, then He would be the cause of evil. Therefore, God and evil must exist together for all eternity, for God cannot be responsible or evil.
  - 2) The Fallacy of These Premises
    - (a) It is possible for evil to occur out of good, through incidental means. Example: a man may kill a dog while backing out of his driveway. Backing up a car is not evil, but the animal is accidentally slain.
    - (b) Evil cannot exist on its own; it is a corruption of that which already exists. Example: sex is good, adultery is evil.
- C. Theism: There is an All Powerful, All-Good God, who Recognizes the Reality of Evil (Romans 1:18-32)

### IV. SOME QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

- A. Why did God allow evil to occur in the first place?
  - 1) God created the universe without evil and suffering. He created man perfect, with the ability to love or reject the God who created Him. Man rejected God and, at this point, evil and suffering entered the world.
  - 2) God did not create evil or sin. God's plan had the potentiality for evil when He gave man freedom of choice, but man is responsible for evil. For any relationship to have meaning, it must allow for the ability to reject or accept it.
- B. How does the fall of man account for natural evil?
 

The fall included not only a curse on man, but also a curse on the creation around him. (Genesis 3:14-19; Romans 8:18-23)

C. Why hasn't God stopped evil, if He can?

For God to stop evil totally, He would have to eliminate all actual evil and potential evil. How many people would be left on earth if He did that?

**Consider Noah's day:** God eliminated actual evil and left potential evil, and evil returned.

D. What are we to do with suffering?

1) It does n't necessarily mean we are out of God's will (Jesus and the cross)

2) Doing God's will doesn't necessarily shield us from trials (2 Cor. 4:7-12)

(a) Remember God is bigger than our situation

(b) Take focus off problems and onto God

(c) Ask what is God's purpose: what does He want me to learn?

(d) Ultimate struggle with evil is within, not externally

\$ Are you striving to live a life of holiness or happiness?

\$ Problem of evil is ultimately about our rebellion to God's will: evil and suffering stem from our being disconnected from God

\$ In your deepest times of suffering, what steps are you taking to get connected to God?

(e) Distinguish source of evil from source of suffering

(1) Source of evil: resistance to God's will

(2) Source of suffering:

(a) Sin in our life

(b) Sin in someone else's life that affects us

(c) Failure to heed warnings

(d) Work of Satan

E. The questions isn't "Will He stop evil" but "When will He stop evil".

2 Peter 3:9 tells us God is longsuffering, not wanting any to perish. He is extending the time for people to repent and turn to Him. He allows temporal suffering, so people will escape eternal suffering.

### CONCLUSION:

We all have sinful, wicked hearts and live in a sin-cursed world. This should not drive us to despair, but should drive us to our Savior, who we so desperately need. There is coming a day when He will make all things right (Romans 8:18). Until then, we need to trust in God and make the most of every opportunity (Eph. 5:15-16), pointing people to Christ.

### APPLICATION

1) How do you respond when you experience evil (sin)? Do you exercise faith and trust, or do you get angry and bitter?

2) Why did we say that our ultimate struggle with evil is from within? (What are we going to do

when wronged? Get bitter or grow and get better?