

How Can a Loving God Allow Evil to Exist?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. Perhaps one of the most challenging questions that man has ever faced
 - 1. Common reason given for unbelief
 - 2. Why do pain, suffering, and evil exist, if God is good and holy?
 - 3. Simple answers do not satisfy, even though everyone wants a pat answer to what is by design a measure of our faith
- B. Four lessons on questions that try our faith:
 - 1. How can a loving God allow evil to exist?
 - 2. How can a loving God send anyone to hell?
 - 3. Why does a loving God allow me to be tempted?
 - 4. Why did a loving God make me this way?

I. CLARIFYING THE QUESTION

- A. Can God create a realm where there is no evil, pain, suffering, misery?
- B. Yes - 2Peter 3:13; Rev. 7:14-17
- C. If God can create a world without evil, and has prepared a heaven without evil, why didn't He create this world without evil?
 - 1. What people are really asking is why didn't God create this world to be perfect and free of evil?
 - 2. The right question is why does evil exist in the first place?

II. THE BIBLICALLY ACCURATE, BUT EMOTIONALLY UNSATISFYING ANSWERS

- A. Evil is a consequence of sin
 - 1. Sin and death enter the world as a consequence of Adam's sin
Rom. 5:12-18
 - 2. Message of prophets: God will bring evil upon those who disobey
 - a. 2Kings 17:22-23; Isa. 1:19-20; Jer. 15:1-9, 18:5-11; Amos 1-2
 - 3. There are times when people experience evil because of their sin
 - a. Acts 5:1-11, 13:4-12
 - 4. The sentence of hell for those who do not believe and obey
 - a. Matt. 25:31-46; Rom. 2:5-11; 2Thes. 1:6-9
 - 5. It also explains why infants, children experience evil as collateral damage, the consequence of sin in the world - Rom. 5:14, 18
- B. Evil is a consequence of free will
 - 1. God has not compelled anyone to follow Him, but gives everyone the choice to obey or disobey
 - 2. Isa. 7:15-16; Ez. 18:18-20, 25-28
 - 3. We practice sin and suffer the consequences of evil because of our own free will decisions and the free will decisions of others
 - 4. If God acted to remove man's free will, He would cease to be God
- C. Powers, civil, military, and economic, currently rule this world
 - 1. Dan. 7-12; 2Cor. 4:4; Eph. 6:12; Rev. 12:9-12

D. The answer is unknown

1. Job asks why the innocent suffer, and he is not given an explanation - Job 38:4
2. The Preacher understands such questions to be vanity; he sees evil, but finds no explanation for it - Ecc. 4:1, 8:14, 16-17

III. NOT WRONG ANSWERS -- THE WRONG QUESTION

A. Many are left entirely unsatisfied by these answers; none of them really get to why evil exists in the first place

B. So where is the problem -- the answers or the question?

C. Why are we asking the question: "Why does evil exist?"

1. If we obtained a most satisfying answer, would it change anything?
2. The idea is that if we could only know why evil exists, we could somehow gain power over evil because of that knowledge

D. But evil is too complicated for that

1. Eph. 6:12 - Evil is so pervasive
2. Evil can't be separated from those who perpetuate it; and we all have, at some point, perpetuated evil - Rom. 3:23
3. If we could eradicate evil, we would have to do away with ourselves
4. Now that evil is in this world, it can never be removed from this world without destroying the world. It is here. Deal with it.
5. We learn to imitate our Father by bringing good out of evil
 - a. Death is generally considered an evil, but without death, we cannot eat meat, this world would be vastly overpopulated, people would suffer interminably with the decline of health with age, we could never leave this world to be with God
 - b. The very forces that lead to natural disasters also generate life and healthy change; new growth after a forest fire, flood, volcano
 - c. James 1:2-4

E. As Solomon said, the question is ultimately flawed and vain

1. No one has yet come up with a compelling, transformative answer
2. Even if such an answer could be found, it does not change the reality of evil, and the pain, suffering, and misery it causes
3. What purpose is served by the question, other than self-torment? Evil is here in this world to stay. Deal with it.
4. Instead of asking, why does evil exist, we would be better off asking, what is God doing about evil?

IV. GOD'S ANSWER TO EVIL

A. Matt. 17:5; Rom. 8:32; 1Peter 2:21-24

B. If God were truly able to just will evil away and remain God, would He have consented to see His beloved Son suffer on the cross for sin? - Matt. 26:39

1. If there were a way of getting evil out of the way so that His Son would not suffer, God would certainly have taken that option

C. What did God do about evil? He defeated evil on the cross!

1. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus triumphs

a. 1Cor. 15:20-26

D. God may never explain to us why evil exists in the first place, but we know that He has dealt with the reality of evil by the cross

V. MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL

A. What shall we say then?

B. In the end, evil is not something that we can make disappear in this world, but instead it must be conquered

C. We can only conquer evil through Jesus

1. Rev. 12:11; Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:17; Phil. 2:5-11; 1Peter 2:20-24

2. While we may never be able to understand why evil exists, we can find meaning in our suffering, and accept its value - 1Peter 1:6-7

4. In our lives, have we learned more by our successes or our failures?

Conclusion:

A. Solomon, the world's wisest man, and Job, the world's most patient sufferer came to the conclusion that we will never know for certain why evil exists in this world

B. But we can have all confidence that God has acted against evil definitively through the death of Jesus on the cross