

Glad You Asked

Suffering and Evil

Sunday, April 13, 2014

1 Peter 1:6-9

I. Introduction

"The problem of evil is probably the most difficult problem in all of theology, and for many atheists it is the Achilles' heel of the theistic worldview." John Frame

Summary: How can there be any evil in the world, if God exists? Or if God is omnipotent, he is able to prevent evil and if God is good, he wants to prevent evil, but evil exists so the conclusion is either God is not omnipotent, or he is not good.

We must make a distinction between natural evil and moral evil. Natural evil is suffering brought on by earthquakes, floods, diseases and death. Moral evil is the sin of rational creatures (angels and men).

Satan's temptation and the disobedience of Adam and Eve committed a moral evil and natural evil followed. Genesis 3:17b; Romans 8:22

*"We need help with the **emotional** problem of evil, not merely the **logical** problem of evil." R. Alcorn*

II. Non-theistic Worldview

Unbelievers often raise concerns about evil and suffering as if they present a problem exclusively for the Christian worldview. But every worldview must attempt to account for them.

Calling evil a problem assumes a standard of goodness; but if God doesn't exist, then by what objective basis can we measure morality? Many times they base their morality on their feelings!

III. Theistic Worldview

As Christians, we MUST for God, ourselves and others have a biblical worldview when it comes to suffering and evil. Our faith WILL be tested!

"Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good." 1 Peter 4:19

"...we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know. For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain." 1 Thessalonians 3:2-5

A faith that leaves us unprepared for suffering is a false faith that deserves to be lost.

"Wimpy worldviews make wimpy Christians. And wimpy Christians won't survive the days ahead." John Piper

1) God 'permits' suffering and uses it for His glory!

God 'permits' evil to glorify himself by showing his children the wonders of his character.

Isaiah 48:9-11

2) God permits suffering to transform us

God and Satan intend the same suffering for entirely different purposes, but God's purpose triumphs.

Satan attempts to destroy our faith, while God invites us to draw near to him and draw upon his grace to sustain us. God will sustain us while He transforms us! Suffering brings us into deeper intimacy with God.

3) God permits our suffering for the good of others

Suffering draws us close to others, deepening friendships. It makes our hearts tender and gives us a greater love for others. We become compassionate!

We can comfort others in suffering even when our own suffering is different. But our suffering and how we handle it makes Jesus visible to the world.

4) God permits suffering to drive us to repentance!

"God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world." C.S. Lewis

Luke 13:1-5

5) God permits suffering to remind us that nothing can separate us from His love!

How do we deal with the emotional problem of evil and suffering? We look to God and His attributes. God's covenant promise in comforting us and reminding us of the love of Jesus which no evil can separate us.

Romans 8:35-39

IV. God's Answer for Suffering and Evil

The question is asked, "Why doesn't God do something?" The answer is: God has done something, and is doing something.

"God has done something about the problem of evil. He has done the most dramatic, costly, and effective thing possible by giving His Son to die for evil man. It is possible for man to escape God's inevitable judgment on sin and evil. It is also possible to have its power broken by entering into a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The ultimate answer to the problem of evil, at the person level, is found in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ." Little

The cross of Jesus was the most evil act of mankind!

V. Conclusion