

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW EVIL AND SUFFERING ?

1. The question before us is one which SEEMS to reveal a grave inconsistency between what a Christian believes and the stark reality of life which we see in the world around us. On the one hand the Bible teaches that **God is GOOD**, but this seems to be nothing more than empty words when the world He created is so full of pain and sorrow. How can a good God allow so much bad? If, as the Bible teaches, **God is LOVE**, surely God has the motive to stop suffering. His love for us would force Him to intervene, so why doesn't He? **God is ALMIGHTY**, He is not powerless to do anything about it. In a moment of time He could remove all pain and sorrow from the world, BUT HE DOESN'T. Why then does he not act to give His creatures true peace and lasting happiness?

David Hume: *"A hospital full of diseases, a prison crowded with malefactors and debtors, a field strewn with carcasses, a fleet floundering in the ocean, a nation languishing under tyranny, famine or pestilence. Honestly, I don't see how you can possibly square this with the ultimate purpose of love."*

1. The existence of evil

Suffering cannot be divorced from evil. If God were to remove suffering He would of necessity have to remove all evil also. Evil is not a "thing" to destroy, it is a lack of good - a lack of love.

Did God Create evil? (Summarizing Dr. Norman Geisler)

1. If God created all things
2. and evil exists
3. God must have created evil.

Evil does not exist in itself but is the lack of good in something else (It is like rot in an apple).

God created only good things, but evil is not a thing (but a lack in a good thing) so God did not create evil.

If there is no moral law giver, there is no moral law, and if there are no moral laws, there is no moral good, and if there is no moral good, there is no moral evil! By asking the question about justice and evil, we have an assumption of the essential value of human life

No one removes the problems and pain in life by removing God. Then all circumstances are pure chance – it leaves people worse off as there is no purpose behind everything. Nothing has any ultimate purpose and results in meaninglessness

- A. God is absolutely perfect.
- B. God cannot create anything imperfect.
- C. And a perfect creature cannot do evil.
- D. Therefore, evil cannot arise in such a world.
- E. But evil did arise in this world.
- F. *God is not perfect, and/or God did not create a perfect creature.*

God created only good things, but one good thing God created was free will, and free will makes evil possible, thus a perfect free creature can do evil.

Note: God made evil **possible** (via free will = good)
But free creatures made evil **actual**.

2. The persistence of evil

If God is Sovereign He can prevent or remove evil

If God is in control of everything, yet does not prevent evil, then He must be the author of evil.

If God is all powerful He can remove evil

God promises that evil will be defeat it in the future

3. The purpose of evil

If God who planned and created everything, created a world where, in His omniscience He knew things would go wrong and result in so much suffering, why would He do so?

God is good so He must have a **good purpose** for everything, but there is no good purpose for some suffering (e.g. the innocent suffering).

Just because we don't know a good purpose for evil does not mean there is none. God is good, so *even evil that seems to us to have no good purpose, does have a good purpose.*

"His ways are unsearchable and His judgments past finding out" (Rom. 11:33).

"I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning" (Isa. 46:10).

1. Some pain has a good purpose (e.g. warning pains).

A tooth ache

A pain in the chest

A pain in the lower right side

2. We learn more through pain than pleasure:

Few enduring lessons are learned through pleasure, and the most enduring lessons are learned through pain.

- God is more interested in our character than He is our comfort.
- God is more interested in our holiness than He is our happiness.

"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word" (Psalm 119:67)

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Gen. 50:20)

"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness..." (Heb. 12:11).

God is **able** to remove evil and suffering but chooses to wait until a final day of judgement because:-

a. To be consistent He would have to remove **all** evil. Most of the suffering in the world is a direct result of the selfishness, hatred, carelessness and evil of mankind. If God were to remove all suffering, He would have to remove all evil. If He did, what would happen to you and I?

b. Evil cannot be removed in a sinful world without removing freedom. If God removed our freedom there would be no such thing as love. We would cease to be humans and become like animals. Stripped of the dignity of free choice, we would only obey God and care for others because we were programmed or forced to do so.

c. Mankind would lose one of the greatest warnings of a greater evil awaiting us. Suffering in this life due to mankind's wrong choice is evidence of eternal suffering in hell resulting from people's continued wilful choice not to love and obey God.

"God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" 2 Peter 3 v 9

God's plan is to have a company of people who are His very own, who love Him freely, and obey Him and become conformed to the image of His Son, and that He will bring these ones to glory. Everything He does and allows is used by Him to accomplish His goal!

1. He wanted humans to love Him freely – not because He gave them no choice
2. God knew that humans would learn more about their creator if He allowed them the freedom to go their own way and learn the outcome of sin

True love can legitimately cause pain. A parent shows love by disciplining a naughty child; and in the same way pain and death have a REMEDIAL PURPOSE. God allows pain BECAUSE He loves us! God uses pain for good. It is one way God has chosen to convince us that something is wrong with creation (and especially with the human race), and that God is no respecter of persons in judgement. No nation, religion or social class is exempt.

If God doesn't deal with evil and wrong in this life, when does He intend to do so? The Bible shows that God is storing all things up for a day of final judgement. Before that day, mankind has the freedom to choose his destiny (Acts 17:30,31; Revelation 14,15).

"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, *The Problem of Pain*, 81).

How much suffering would be removed by keeping the 10 commandments (a society with no lust, greed, lies, murder, etc.)

Sin is basically a lack of love and often DIRECTLY results in unhappy consequences for the person who commits the sin, but more so for others. Much of the suffering in the world is a result of the selfishness, greed and hatred of mankind. Even so-called 'natural disasters' can be attributed in some measure to people's selfish disregard for the environment.

If suffering goes on even though God is good He must have a PURPOSE in allowing it to continue. In a similar way God did not stop the terrible UNDESERVED suffering and death of His only beloved Son, Jesus Christ. WHY? Because there was a purpose in Christ's suffering. Christ's death was to bring people salvation from sin and punishment. The purpose of our suffering is to warn us of death and hell, and to show us our need of the Lord Jesus as our Saviour from judgement (John 3:16-18; Romans 5:6-8).

Jesus said, "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his own life, or what can a man give in exchange for his life?" (Mark 8:36). When all our effort is spent in making THIS life comfortable at the expense of preparing for the eternity to follow, our energies are wasted. People generally view life from the perspective of time; a life time of so many years, with a vague possibility of life after death being an additional extra. To most, life in Heaven is not REALITY as life on earth is.

To the average person Heaven is mystical, a dream! However, God views man's life from the perspective of eternity, and teaches us in the Bible to do the same. Life on earth is VANITY in itself - the REALITY is kept for the timeless ages of eternity in Heaven.

*Said the Robin to the Sparrow,
"I should really like to know
Why these anxious human beings
Rush about a worry so."
Said the Sparrow to the Robin,
"Friend, I think that it must be
That they have no heavenly Father
Such as cares for you and me."*

Elizabeth Cheney