

The Problem of Evil: World Religions' Answers

**How can a loving God exist
if there is so much evil and
suffering in the world?**

We see evil and suffering everyday



We see the effects of sin everyday



We see the effects of sin everyday



We can list tons of evils:

- **Murder**
- **Rape**
- **Lying**
- **Stealing**
- **Drug abuse**
- **Unjust Wars**
- **Pornography**
- **Pride**
- **Oppression**
- **Starvation**
- **Drunk driving accidents**
- **Hitler, Stalin, Mao Tse-Tung – caused deaths in the tens of millions**
- **Genocide in Rwanda**
- **Addictions**

We struggle with making sense of:

- **Tsunamis**
- **Earthquakes**
- **Tornados, cyclones**
- **Famine**
- **Drought or floods**
- **Disease**
- **Collapse bridges and dams**

Does God cause or allow these disasters?

Are these “natural disasters”?

Are they because of the Fall or just random accidents?

Why do many people ignore God all their lives and yet call these “acts of God”?

Logic

- The problem of evil has plagued people since time began.
- The logic of the argument goes like this:
 1. If God is perfect, good, and loving, He must want to abolish evil.
 2. If He is all powerful, He must be able to abolish evil.
 3. But evil exists.
 4. Therefore, an all powerful, loving God does not exist.

Logic

- **Is He willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then He is not all-powerful.**
- **Is He able, but not willing? Then He is mean or uncompassionate.**
- **Is He both able and willing? Why then is there evil?**

Logic

- Epicurus, a Greek philosopher from the 3rd century B.C. was probably the first to articulate this problem.
- He never solved the problem.
- As theists, we must accept both that there is a good and powerful God, and that evil does indeed exist; but that this does not entail a logical contradiction. A paradox is a seeming contradiction, but it can be resolved. God and evil may be a paradox but it is not a contradiction.

Christianity has an answer

- **Before examining what the Bible says about evil and suffering we should see what other religions teach to see which worldview or religion offers the best solution and corresponds with reality.**

Three Solutions

- In essence, there are only three solutions to the problem of evil, namely, *pantheism*, *theism* and *philosophical naturalism*.
- *Pantheism* denies the separate existence of good and evil because in this view god is all and all is god.
- Everything in the universe is god in this view. He is not distinct from creation.
- Therefore in this view one could say that god is evil since we do see evil and “all is god.”

Three Solutions

- **A lack of distinction between God and creation and creatures blurs everything into one category and offers no solution to our dilemma or a grid through which we can understand history or our life experiences.**
- **This worldview denies the existence of evil.**
- **The pantheistic worldview does not fit with reality and has caused untold suffering in nations like India.**

Buddhism and Hinduism

- *Theism* is the belief in the existence of a god or gods, especially belief in a personal God as creator and ruler of the world.
- Hinduism is a kind of theism.
- Christian theism is distinct and offers a unique answer to the problem of evil.
- Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity are examples of theistic religions though they vastly differ in their teachings on God, man, sin, salvation, Christ, heaven, and hell.
- Some Hindus see “God/Brahman” as an impersonal force and is therefore pantheistic (see Baker, p. 17)

Buddhism and Hinduism

- **Some sects of Hinduism and Buddhism would say that either evil does not exist, it is just an illusion (Christian Science teaches this as well);**
- **Some believe any evil that happens is a result of our bad karma which we inherited from our bad deeds from our past lives.**

Buddhism and Hinduism

- **Buddhism does not believe in a personal God. It does not have worship, prayer, or praise of a divine being. It offers no redemption, no forgiveness, no hope of heaven, and no final judgment.**
- **Buddhism is more of a moral philosophy, an ethical way of life than a “religion.”**

Buddhism and Hinduism

- **Buddhism was founded by a Hindu, Siddhartha Gautama, during the sixth century B.C.**
- **After being profoundly impacted by seeing four kinds of suffering in one day, Siddhartha committed himself to finding the source of suffering and how to eliminate it.**

Buddhism and Hinduism

- Buddha (a title given to Siddhartha – it means “the awakened” or “enlightened one”) taught that life is permeated with suffering caused by desire, that suffering ceases when desire ceases, and that enlightenment obtained through right conduct, wisdom, and meditation releases one from desire, suffering, and the cycle of rebirth.
- Unfortunately, it’s a self-defeating premise: if you set a goal to eliminate desire, then you desire to eliminate desire.

Buddhism and Hinduism

- In addition, much of the evil we see in the world is not just tied to desire.
- Many cases of murder or injustice speak to the fallen human condition (and insanity), not merely desire.
- Even in the case of such desire, we know that the human heart is sinful and that people apart from God cannot change their heart.
- In essence, Buddhism teaches a works-based “salvation” in that there is no God or gods, and man is left to himself to reform himself.

Buddhism and Hinduism

- There is no relationship with God or faith in Him since Buddhists do not believe there is a god.
- The common acknowledgment of almost all Buddhists states: “this world is not created and ruled by a God.” (Basic Points of Buddhism)
- However, there is a sect of Buddhism, called Mayahana that has elevated Buddha to a god, even though he is dead.
- Siddhartha Gautama Buddha never intended to begin a religion, but reform Hinduism.
- So, you can see how they have similar beliefs.

Buddhism and Hinduism

- **“The Buddhist quest for peace is self-focused. One attains peace through meditation, good works, and pure knowledge. In Buddhism we are driven to discipline ourselves to think correctly, behave correctly, etc... with the ultimate goal to rid ourselves of all desires. Although Buddhism teaches to not harm others and do good, salvation is found by the individual as he focuses on himself and one’s attaining enlightenment and elimination of all desire.” (Zukeran, Probe.org)**

Buddhism and Hinduism

- Since Buddhism believes that the universe and the person do not really exist there can be no real solution to the problem of evil because all is an illusion.
- For those who are suffering from sickness, sin, or the many evils/injustices that plague our world, this is certainly not a satisfactory answer while we are suffering or seeing others suffer!

Buddhism and Hinduism

- Strangely enough, Buddhism's view of reincarnation is different from Hinduism's. The soul or person cannot be reborn in Buddhism, but somehow his or her karma goes on. It is a strange contradiction. (Anatha = there is no self)
- The goal of Buddhists is not heaven; it is Nirvana, a state of extinction, where one's essence-which does not actually exist in the first place-is extinguished like a candle flame, marking the end of desire and thus the end of suffering. Again – here is a major contradiction. How can Nirvana mean we finally stop existing if we never really truly ever existed in the first place?

Buddhism and Hinduism

- One problem with this belief system is that the Bible says that there is no reincarnation (Heb. 9:27).
- Reincarnation only presents more problems having to do with justice. What did a child do in a past life to deserve to die from starvation or be aborted? What would this child's lot be in the next life since he didn't live long enough to commit any evils? Is that fair? How can a person "atone" for these things so that his karma will be better in the next life?

Buddhism and Hinduism

- In addition, being reborn does not solve the problem of sin, evil, or offer any true sense of salvation.
- There is no real solution, only “replays.”
- Reincarnation is like digging yourself out of a prison cell only to find out that you dug into another prison cell.
- Almost every tenet of Buddhism is diametrically opposed to the revelation from God in the Bible.

Buddhism and Hinduism

- Again, this view cannot explain where evil came from nor can it account for the fact that many things that are evil do not come from our own desires! Tsunamis, cancer, or wars cannot simply be reduced to “desire.” Evil is more complex than that.
- In addition, in Hinduism one can be reborn as a human, animal, or insect. How can an insect do evil or change his karma?

Buddhism and Hinduism

- There is no heaven in Hinduism – the ultimate goal is to attain enlightenment and then be dissolved into Brahman, or the true reality.
- How can there be justice or enjoyment of the absence of evil if ultimately we cease to exist?
- This view also denies the gods' role in this cycle and therefore the gods are not more powerful than evil.

Buddhism and Hinduism

- **There are over 330 million gods in Hinduism and yet not one of them is powerful enough to intervene in the evils of the world.**
- **The gods are impotent and subject to a futile system.**
- **The law of karma is an impersonal, absolute law that the gods have no power over or enough love to change.**
- **Hinduism and Buddhism offer no insight or hope with regard to the problem of evil.**

Islam

- Islam, another theism, teaches a fatalism in which all things, good and evil, are directly from Allah.
- It does not teach that people are born fallen and sinful with a propensity to choose sin.
- Because there is no fall, God must be responsible for evil.
- Islam teaches that God ordains evil.

Islam

- **This is why radical Islamists believe they can usher in a utopia on earth by forcing nations to come under Islamic law.**
- **No change in the human heart is needed (as Christianity teaches comes through faith in Christ) but rather, changing the culture brings in paradise. Since man is inherently good or neutral in Islam, salvation is not needed as Christians understand salvation.**
- **Hence their hatred for non-Muslim societies and desire to “convert” national laws.**

Islam

- **Since salvation is external in their view, and not internal or personal, the radical Jihadist's goal must be to force each nation to come under Islamic rule.**
- **This will bring about paradise on earth in their view.**

Islam

- It is true that in the Bible there are passages that state that God may bring about judgment or “evil” (which can also be translated as “calamity” or “disaster” in these passages). This does not mean that God is evil or caused or created evil. It merely means that God has the right to judge sin (Isaiah 45:7; Lamentations 3:38; Amos 3:6; Job 1:21, 2:10).
- If God wants to bring about calamity against Sodom and Gomorrah, He is sovereign, holy, and just and has the prerogative to do so.
- In the Bible, sin is always attributed to people and NEVER to God.

Islam

- **As a side-note – the Hebrew word for “evil” in the Bible can be translated many, many ways. It is a rich word with various nuances (such as our word for bad – evil, spoiled, mean, immoral, inept).**
- **It can mean “evil” but in these contexts (e.g. Amos 3:6) it most certainly means, “disaster, calamity, etc.” as is translated in the NASB.**
- **God brings disaster upon people in judgment to save His people and to bring about His purposes (e.g. the plagues, against the Egyptians to rescue His people)**

Islam

- **Islam attributes evil to God which the Bible never does.**
- **Islam offers no solution with regard to how to deal with suffering, nor how peace or paradise can be attained without actually causing suffering.**
- **The Koran speaks of killing non-Muslims (Christians and Jews), and causes much evil and suffering in their quest for paradise just like Communism.**
- **Jihad is not a “spiritual struggle” as the media states. It is killing “infidels.” Jihad is discussed 100s of times in the Koran.**

Islam

- http://www.answering-islam.org/Quran/Themes/jihad_passages.html lists 164 passages which speak of such hatred, animosity, and blood-thirst.
- Koran: “[2.190] ...fight in the way of *Allah* with those who fight with you...[2.191] And kill them wherever you find them”

Islam

- A religion which portrays evil as mostly being caused by non-Muslims offers no real solutions.
- Forced “conversion” only perpetuates evil and suffering.
- Allah does nothing to redeem or help people, He is unknowable, and does not display love.
- The history of Islam is violence starting with Muhammad himself who slaughtered about 1000 Jews in one day. It was spread by the sword.
- The top conflicts in the world today from Africa to Indonesia, are caused by radical Islamists.

Scientology

- **Scientology teaches that evil is the result of the influence of aliens!**
- **Those that reach the higher teachings within the Church of Scientology will learn all about Xenu, the evil intergalactic ruler who implanted “thetans” or alien spirits, in earth’s volcanoes 75 million years ago, after which they escaped and invaded human bodies.**

Scientology

- The ultimate belief of Scientology is that you are possessed by the spirits of aliens murdered 75 million years ago by “Xenu” and you have to exorcise these spirits. The cost of reaching this level of enlightenment is over \$360,000.
- How does Scientology deal with the problem of evil? Through money!
- What caused evil? Aliens. Not an answer most people will accept. How did the aliens infect us? Where are they now? Will they come back and do more damage even if we overcome evil? The questions go on and on...

Evolution or Atheism

- *Philosophical naturalism* (the worldview undergirding evolutionism) supposes that everything is a function of random (or chance) material processes, and thus there can be no such thing as good and evil in an ultimate sense.
- Since the only thing that exists in this view is what we can see (naturalism/materialism) there is no sin, soul, God, good, bad, heaven, or hell. The universe and people are an accident and there is no God in this view nor objective basis to determine right or wrong, good or evil.
- The naturalist must be prepared to live in a world without meaning, and in which there is no hope that evil and suffering will ever be overcome.

Evolution or Atheism

- If there is no God, then everything in the universe is just random or chance. There is no purpose in suffering, and no God to turn to for comfort, and no absolute truth. There is no hope of heaven, or an understanding of humanity that accounts for the majesty and depravity of mankind. There can be no such thing as good or evil since the universe and human life is a result of random processes and evolution. There is no explanation for the unity and diversity we see in the world, or the existence of the world.

Evolution or Atheism

- All scientists agree that the universe is not eternal and therefore it had a beginning. Something outside of the universe must have caused it to be created since matter, time, or space cannot create itself!
- Evolutionists want us to believe that everything came from nothing. The beauty, complexity, and purposefulness of creation and humanity we are told to believe (by faith I might add since no one saw this) came from nothing.
- It is impossible to believe this. Something cannot come from nothing. Life cannot come from non-life. This goes against many laws of science and common sense. An eternal being must have created the universe and humanity.

Evolution or Atheism

- In fact – the idea or presence of evil does not deny the existence of God. It proves it.
- The only way one could know there is evil is if there is an absolute objective standard which declares what is right and wrong.
- If you get a 70 on a test, and it's a C, that presupposes that 100 is the standard.
- “If there is no God, where did we get the standard of goodness by which we judge evil as evil?” (*Case for Faith*, 34)

Evolution or Atheism

- **God has given us a conscience, the light of creation (see Romans 1), and His Word.**
- **We can agree that murder is wrong because God formed our consciences and helps us determine what is right and wrong.**
- **Without God there would be no perception of evil.**

Evolution or Atheism

- If there were no God no one could say what is right or wrong!
- We could not define what evil is unless God existed who is the definition of good.
- The knowledge of evil means we must somehow know something about its opposite – good. It is because God exists that we have a sense of right and wrong.
- If evolution is true and we are just animals and beings that evolved by chance, on what basis can you say that murder or lying, or infidelity is wrong?
- Evolution or Atheism offers no solution to the existence and problem of evil.

Christianity has the answer

- *Theism* alone has a relevant response — and only *Christian* theism can answer the question satisfactorily.
- Because God has spoken, we have timeless truth that gives us answers, comfort, and hope.



Christianity has the answer

- Christianity is the only worldview which can account for the dignity of humanity and the sinfulness of humanity without impugning God's holy character.
- Christian theism therefore acknowledges that God allowed the potential for evil because God created a universe in which humans could have choice. History shows us that humans can choose good or evil.
- The following statements must mean that the atheistic worldview, as well as the non-Biblical views (pantheism, Hinduism, Islam, etc.), cannot be true or give a satisfactory answer.

Christianity has the answer

- **The Bible teaches 5 things that offer the only real explanation for evil, and one that no other religion explains in the same way:**
 - 1. God created the universe without any evil or suffering. It was completely good. (Genesis 1-2)**
 - 2. God created humans in a perfect state.**

Christianity has the answer

3. God created people with a perfect ability to freely choose between staying in harmony with God or rejecting God. In order for love to be authentic, it must involve a choice. God did not create robots.
4. Humanity (Adam and Eve) freely chose to turn away from God (to sin) and to rebel against His love and care (Rom. 5). (God allowed in His sovereignty, for greater good and display of His glory)
5. Sin, evil, and suffering entered into the world as a result of this separation from God. God is good. People caused evil and suffering to enter into the world.

Christianity has the answer

- **Some skeptics have argued:**
 - 1. God is absolutely perfect.**
 - 2. God cannot create anything imperfect.**
 - 3. Perfect creatures cannot do evil.**
 - 4. Therefore, neither God nor his perfect creatures can produce evil.**

Christianity has the answer

- **Augustine and Thomas Aquinas rightly countered:**
 - 1. God is absolutely perfect.**
 - 2. God created only perfect creatures.**
 - 3. One of the perfections God gave some of his creatures was the power of free choice.**
 - 4. Some (angels and Adam and Eve) of these creatures freely chose to do evil.**
 - 5. Therefore, a perfect creature caused evil.**

Christianity has the answer

- God created Adam and Eve in His image, and gave Adam dominion over the world (Gen. 1:27-28). When they rebelled against God, they set in motion an entire series of events and changed the very nature of man and creation. Both were affected and “infected” by sin.
- Creation was no longer a paradise, but bore thorns and thistles (Gen. 3:17-18; Rom. 8:22). People became sinful (Rom. 5:12; Eph. 2:3), haters of God (Rom. 3:19-12) and hateful towards each other (Gen. 4).
- All who are born after Adam and Eve inherit their sinful nature and therefore choose to sin and to do evil in one way or another.

Christianity has the answer

- **Since the Bible teaches that God created the world and it was good, and free from evil or sin (Gen. 1-2)...**
- **And that Adam and Eve chose to sin (and this plunged the human race into sin for all subsequent generations).**
- **Then, it was humanity that introduced evil into the world – not God.**
- **(If man alone wrote the Bible, he'd probably blame God for evil. But God breathed the truth of the matter in His Word)**

Christianity has the answer

- Theists distinguish between the primary cause of a free action (God) and the secondary cause (a human being).
- God gave the power of choice. However, God is not responsible for the exercise of that free choice to do evil.

God does not *perform* the free action for us when it comes to sin.

Christianity has the answer

- **We even see this in everyday life.**
- **God did not make a person get drunk, drive his car, and kill innocent victims.**
- **God did not build the plane Himself or create the malfunction that led to the loss of lives in a plane crash**
- **God did not make a murderer murder or a liar lie. People choose to sin.**

Christianity has the answer

- Some may argue – but why does God allow it?
- Simply put – if He stopped these things, we would not truly have the ability to choose.
- We would be puppets, and not “free moral agents.”
- We have a limited free will (e.g. you can't jump off of the planet. Only God is truly “free”) but a will nonetheless.

Christianity has the answer

- Theists reject dualism.
- Evil is not a coeternal principle outside of God.
- Evil has not always existed. For not all opposites like good and evil are first principles. This wrongly assumes that just because something can be essentially good (God), something can be essentially bad.
- But once dualism is rejected, one has great difficulty explaining the reality of evil. If evil is not something outside of God, and it cannot be anything inside of God, then what is it?

What is evil?

- The problem can be summarized this way.
 1. God is the Author of everything.
 2. Evil is something.
 3. Therefore, God is the Author of evil.

What is evil?

- The theist responds that evil is not a *thing* or substance. Rather it is a *lack* or privation of a good thing that God made.
- Evil is a deprivation of some particular good.
- The essence of this position is summarized:

What is evil?

1. God created every substance.
2. Evil is not a substance (but a privation in a substance).
3. Therefore, God did not create evil.
 - Evil is not a substance but a corruption of the good substances God made.
 - Evil is like rust to a car or rot to a tree. It is a *lack* in good things, but it is not a thing in itself. Evil is like a wound in an arm or moth-holes in a garment. It exists only in another but not in itself.

What is evil?

- It is true that there was evil in the universe before the creation of earth.
- The Bible teaches that an angel rebelled against God (Isa. 14; Ezek. 28; Matt. 25:41; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 1:6) and thus introduced evil among the angels.
- Some obeyed God, some followed Satan, the rebellious angel. This happened before God created the humanity.

What is evil?

- Satan was once an angel, who because of pride, rebelled against God (Isa. 14; Ezek. 28). It was actually Satan who introduced sin into the cosmos, long before God created earth or people.
- We also know that many angels also rebelled with Satan, and these fallen angels are demons (Jude 1:6). But God cast them out of heaven, and judged some, while others await their final judgment. This occurred before the creation of earth, and it was Satan himself, who enticed Adam and Eve to sin in the Garden.

What is evil?

- **Why Satan rebelled, besides pride, is a mystery. The Bible does not say in detail.**
- **Why God chose to create humanity after this is also somewhat of a mystery.**
- **Most theologians believe it had to do with God displaying His glory, and out of His love, desiring to create a people that He would love and bless and who would enjoy Him and glorify Him for eternity through the redemption of His Son.**

God is sovereign

- **Some theologians even say that while God could have stopped the Fall, He chose not to because this displays His full attributes. (The fall is better termed, “the rebellion” or “the sin” – Adam and Eve didn’t “slip” into sin on accident. They willfully chose it and rebelled against God’s authority).**
- **Without the Fall we would not see and appreciate the depths and spectrum of God’s mercy, grace, wrath, holiness, forgiveness, love, and other attributes as fully.**
- **However this is speculation (or a theological deduction) and we must trust that God in His infinite love, holiness, wisdom, and knowledge knew what was best to allow and why.**

God is sovereign

- The rebellion of Satan helps explain why Satan, a sinful creature, was in the Garden (Paradise).
- There is much to why God allowed “the Serpent in Paradise” (the title of a book), but, to put it simply, it had to do with our will or choice.
- Without the choice of evil and good, we would just be robots or puppets.
- In order for us to obey God and choose the Tree of Life, other options had to be present or else there was no choice.

Choices

- **Without choice, there is no true love or freedom. Love must be a choice, not something that is forced.**
- **The choice of the Tree of the Knowledge and Good and Evil also reminded Adam and Eve that they were not the Creator or Lord of all.**
- **Boundaries are needed to ensure proper and good authority.**

The tainting of creation

- The fall introduced problems in creation (Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 8:18-25), and conflict between people (Moses intentionally tells the story of Cain killing Abel right after the Fall) and between people and God.
- This explains why there are tsunamis and earthquakes – at the Fall, creation was also somehow impacted by sin.
- Romans 8 states that God subjected creation to “futility” for a reason (presumably that sinful people cannot inhabit a perfect world – they would ruin it, and their sin already tainted the creative order. Creation’s redemption and man’s redemption occur together in the future.)

Choices

- Christian theism acknowledges that God created the *potential* for evil when he created humans with freedom of choice. We choose to love or hate, to do good or evil.
- The record of history bears sufficient testimony to the fact that humans of their own free will have actualized the reality of evil through their ungodly choices.

Choices

- Finally, the fact that God created the potential for evil by granting us freedom of choice will ultimately lead to the best of all possible worlds — a world in which “there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain” (Rev. 21:4). Those who trust in Christ will be redeemed from evil by His goodness and will forever be free from sin (John 3; 1 Cor. 15).
- In heaven there will be no possibility for evil since the choices have already been confirmed.

God has a plan for the future...

The Biblical response to the problem of evil can be summarized this way:

- 1. God is all good and desires to defeat evil.**
 - 2. God is all powerful and is able to defeat evil.**
 - 3. Evil is not *yet* defeated.**
 - 4. Therefore, God will defeat evil someday.**
- We know because of Christ and God's revelation that this is true.**

God has a plan for the future...

The Biblical perspective sees:

- **God as completely good and holy and free from evil (contra pantheism)**
- **God's good creation and perfection of humanity**
- **A real human choice to rebel and sin**
- **The reality of sin and evil today (inherited/cursed – contra Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam)**

God has a plan for the future...

- **God's sacrificial work to rescue His creatures from sin and death through His own incarnation and death**
- **God dealt with the problem of evil (contra all religions)**
- **No other viewpoint takes all of this into account – they either deny the reality of God, sin, Christ's redemption, or seek to solve the problem in hopeless ways**

God has a plan for the future...

- **We must trust in God's timing.**
- **Paradise lost will be paradise regained.**
- **God will right every wrong and put away evil once for all, in His time and in His way. His plan to do this in stages as the Bible reveals is truly wise.**

God has a plan for the future...

- **We must acknowledge that we ourselves do evil and that it is only by God's grace that we are forgiven. If God destroyed all evil the first time we lied or disobeyed the Law, no one would have hope.**
- **The fact that evil deeds will be judged (Rev. 20), assures people that God will administer justice in the end**
- **In addition, God will create a new heaven and earth where there will be no more catastrophes (Tsunamis, earthquakes, etc.)**
- **They exist now so that people will see the fallen nature of the world, their own depravity, and their need for Christ**

God has a plan for the future...

- **As much as we would like to eradicate evil, God has declared that He has a specific time that He will do that (see Rev. 20-21). The work of Christ has started the reverse of the curse, and enabled sinful people to fellowship with a holy God.**
- **We should be thankful that He restrains much evil and that a holy God does not punish such a sinful world everyday.**
- **We must also never forget that Jesus Christ, God become man, endured suffering, pain, and the worst evils in order to destroy sin and death and to give us eternal life and true hope.**

God has a plan for the future...

- **Where was God on 9-11? The holocaust? Campus shootings? Where was God during recent earthquakes? Where was God during your times of trials?**
- **The same place He was when His Son was being crucified, bearing the sins of the world and enduring the cruelest form of torture and execution.**
- **While He has a right to judge, we must also remember He redeemed us at His own expense, demonstrating His gracious love.**

God has a plan for the future...

- **No one can ever know the depths of Christ's sufferings, since in essence He experienced hell for all people forever, in a matter of hours. This was the greatest sacrifice.**

God has a plan for the future...

- **We don't serve a distant or indifferent God. We serve a God who took on flesh, lived among us, shared our joys and sorrows, wept, died, and is an ever-present help in our life. He is gracious and compassionate.**
- **He has identified with us in our plight in the most intimate ways. And He did so to fix the problem.**
- **The grace of God is seen in that while we sinned against Him, He paid our penalty and debt.**

God did and is doing something about it...

- **Not only does the Bible teach that the responsibility for evil rests with angels and men, but it also affirms that God is actively combating evil through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (see John 12:31-32; Col. 2:15; Eph. 1; 1 John 3:8).**
- **Christ's first coming provided a way for rebellious mankind to be reconciled to God (Rom. 5; 2 Cor. 5).**
- **Romans 5-8 describes the work of Christ as beginning to reverse the Fall.**
- **Matthew 13 teaches that good and evil must exist in this age, presumably, to allow for the salvation of sinners. If Christ returns, time is up.**

God did and is doing something about it...

- **Christ paid the penalty for our sins. At Christ's glorious second coming He will do away with evil forever and create a new heaven and earth that is free from sin.**
- **Believers will receive a resurrected body which is sin-free. "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).**

God did and is doing something about it...

- **We rejoice with the Apostle Paul when he said “The last enemy that will be abolished is death. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. 15:26, 54-57)**

God has a plan for the future...

- **Christians have the hope that, while we know that sin and evil exist, there will be a day when they will be completely abolished because of the Cross:**
- **“There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.” (Rev. 22:3-5)**

Solutions

- Consider some of the good things that can result from evil and suffering:
- It can provide an opportunity for God to display his glory (make evident his mercy, faithfulness and love in the midst of painful circumstances). See John 11 or Job 1-2 and 42.
- It can provide opportunity for us to demonstrate love for one another as we “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2 ; see 1 Cor. 12:26).

Solutions

- It can allow us to give proof of the genuineness of our faith, and even serve to purify our faith (1 Pet. 1:7), showing that we are faithful not simply for the benefits of His blessing but for the love of God Himself (Job 1:9-11).
- It can engender in us greater empathy and compassion, which qualifies us to better comfort others (2 Cor. 1:4).

Solutions

- It can deter us from sin and motivate us to follow God more closely, just as Paul's "thorn in the flesh" kept him from undue pride and promoted true humility and dependence on God (2 Cor. 12:7).
- Paul also said: "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison" (2 Cor. 4:17).

Solutions

- Consider that even Jesus “learned obedience from the things He suffered” (Heb. 5:8). As a man (not in His deity) He learned by experience the value of submitting to the will of God, even when it was the most difficult thing in the world to do!
- Through suffering we learn to be more like Christ. One of Paul’s goals was to know Christ in this manner:
- “My aim is to know him, to experience the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings, and to be like him in his death...” (Phil. 3:10)

Solutions

- Entire books of the Bible have been written about suffering.
- The Psalms have much to say about suffering.
- The book of Job is about suffering.
- 1 Peter and 2 Thessalonians are about suffering.
- Hebrews is about suffering.
- These books offer extraordinary perspective, guidance, and wisdom on suffering and evil.

Solutions

- Major sections of Romans (chapter 5, 8), 2 Corinthians, James 1 and 5, Mark and Acts; Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, Lamentations, etc. are about suffering, not to mention the end of each Gospel is about Jesus' "passion" (which is the old-English word for "suffering").
- We should draw strength by seeing how God dealt with evil and suffering throughout history from these real-life situations in the Bible especially from how the Son of God lived and died and arose from the dead.

Solutions

- The only hope humanity has is Jesus Christ.
- The only “system” of thought or worldview that makes sense out of the problem of evil, and offers solutions is Christianity!

Solutions

- God is with us (Immanuel).
- God has won the victory at the Cross.
- Jesus, God in the flesh, has arose from the dead, conquering sin, Satan, and death forever for those who trust in Him alone for salvation.
- God reigns! (Ps. 47:8, 93, 97; Isa. 52:7; Rev. 19:6)
- God will bring His Kingdom on earth through Christ the King!

Solutions

- In the meantime...
- We acknowledge the reality of evil (mostly caused by sinful choices)
- We share the Gospel to help people be free from sin and have a relationship with God
- We minister to those who are hurting to share Christ's love
- We proclaim the Good News that God has a plan to abolish evil and suffering
- We keep our eyes on Jesus

Bibliography

- ***“The Problem of Evil”- by Dr. Norman Geisler from Baker’s Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics***
- ***The Case for Faith* by Lee Strobel**
- ***Examine the Evidence* by Ralph O. Muncaster**
- ***A Ready Defense* by Josh McDowell**
- ***I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* by Geisler and Turek. The first appendix has a great mock-dialogue between an atheist and a Christian on the problem of evil.**
- ***Developing a Christian Worldview of the Problem of Evil* by Charles W. Colson, Nancy Pearcey**
- ***The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problems of Evil* by John S. Feinberg**

Bibliography

- *Darwin's God: Evolution and the Problem of Evil* by Cornelius G. Hunter
- *God & Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross* by Douglas John Hall
- *How Could God Allow Suffering and Evil? (Tough Questions Series/Willow Creek)* by Garry Poole
- *A Path Through Suffering: Discovering the Relationship Between God's Mercy and Our Pain* by Elisabeth Elliot
- *Why Does God Allow Suffering?* by Nicky Gumbel
- *Christian Theology* by Millard Erickson
- www.probe.org, www.carm.org, www.christiananswers.net, www.gotquestions.org
- *Christian Ethics in Plain Language*, Kirby Anderson and *A Biblical Point of View On Islam*
- *The Serpent of Paradise: The Incredible Story of How Satan's Rebellion Serves God's Purposes* by Erwin W. Lutzer

Bibliography

- See www.ccctucson.org
- Under “Get Connected” there is a list of more books on topics such as Islam, Evolution, Bible Study, Theology, and Apologetics on the “Discipleship Resources” page.