

The Problem of Evil

“...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve,
as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Joshua 24:15

Why do bad things happen to good people?

If God is all good, why does He allow evil?

If God is all powerful, why doesn't He destroy evil?

We often talk about:

- a) Evil acts (like murder, rape, etc.) b) Evil people (like Hitler)
- c) Evil events (like tornadoes, hurricanes, etc.) d) Evil sickness (like cancer)

But... what makes these things evil...???

How would you respond to the following line of reasoning?

- 1) God is the creator of everything
- 2) Evil is a thing
- 3) Therefore, God created evil

Point #1 is a true statement; however points #2 and therefore, #3, are not true.

What, exactly, is the definition of evil?

- 1) Evil is **not** a created thing.
- 2) Evil is a **corruption** of good.
- 3) It is a **hole** in something that was designed to be **solid** (like rust on a car).

*Rust cannot exist in and of itself. Evil cannot exist by itself, but only as a part of something else. Example: Satan is a corruption of a very good being God created; the angel Lucifer. **Isaiah 14:12-15***

What makes us (or Satan, for that matter) commit sin or become evil?

Our own **free will**.

Joshua 24:15

Ezekiel 28:11-17

Isaiah 14:12-15

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God made us with free will – the ability to choose – so that we could freely choose to love Him. Without free will, we would be nothing more than robots. Free will gives us the ability to choose evil as well as good. So, the origin of evil is our own free will. This was a risk God knowingly took when He created us with a free will... we have a choice to make!

The creation around us has also become subjected to our evil. **Genesis 3:17-18**

As a result, animals, insects, earthquakes, tornadoes, lightening, storms, and all of nature has ‘fallen’ as well... **Romans 8:19-23**

Nature will not be renewed until Christ returns... **Revelation 21:1, 4 and 22:3**

Can Evil be stopped...?

How would you respond to this argument:

- 1) If God was all-good, He *would* destroy evil.
- 2) If God is all-powerful, He *could* destroy evil.
- 3) But... evil is not destroyed.
- 4) Therefore, there is no such God...

Consider the following:

- 1) If you destroy evil, you automatically destroy free will, and that would be evil itself.
- 2) So, we need to talk about overcoming evil; not destroying it.
- 3) Just because evil isn't overcome yet, that doesn't mean it won't eventually be overcome...
- 4) So, if God is all powerful, why doesn't He destroy evil? Because He would have to destroy free will and humanity with it... and that He won't do. Much like we could destroy our drug problem by shooting all the people who buy / sell drugs, but we won't.

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What, then, is the purpose of evil...?

- 1) We can't assume that there is no good **purpose** for evil, just because we don't know what it is. We're not omniscient (all-knowing, like God). We're finite (having a beginning and an end). This doesn't disprove God's benevolence; it just reveals our limitations.
- 2) We know sometimes God uses evil, or pain, to warn us of a **greater** evil, or pain. C.S. Lewis says that “pain is God's megaphone to warn a morally-deaf world”.
 - a) A baby touching a hot stove for the first time; they won't do that again...
 - b) Lepers lose fingers because their nerves are deadened to pain and they can't feel when they're being injured...
- 3) Some evil brings about a **greater** good. ***Romans 8:28*** doesn't say *all things* are good, but that *God can bring about good* from all things.
 - a) The Old Testament story of Joseph in ***Genesis 50:20***.

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good
to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.
So then, don't be afraid...”

Genesis 50:20

- 4) **Permitting** some evil actually helps **defeat** evil.
 - a) Some substance-abuse programs give an addict a medicine designed to create an extremely upset stomach if they continue to use, as in alcoholism.
 - b) The cross is the ultimate example of this... Crucifixion is an evil way to die; yet God allowed this to happen to His Son to purchase our salvation...
- 5) Sometimes evil is a **by-product** of something good. God created water for many good purposes, and, while swimming is great, drowning can (and does) happen.