

## The Problem of Evil

Christians believe God is good. Christians believe that God is all-powerful. So if God is good why is there so much evil in the world? If God is all-powerful and in control, why doesn't He stop evil from happening? If God is a loving God, why is there so much pain, poverty and injustice in the world? Why would a merciful God send people to hell? Why did God create the devil? Why must we endure so much pain? Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?

*TRUTH #1 – God is good. Matthew 19:17; Acts 10:38; Psalm 145:8-9*

### Free Will vs. Predestination

In order to answer the question of evil we have to come to an understanding of just how God interacts with mankind. There are only three options here:

1) God is all-powerful and decides all that happens

Pros: It's comforting - we can rest in the knowledge that God is in control and knows what He's doing. **Colossians 1:15-17**

Cons: It slanders God's character. God is a monster responsible for rape, incest, abortion, genocide, down syndrome, and sends people to hell without a choice. It's contradictory.

2) God is not all powerful and does not decide what happens.

Pros: Keeps God goodness in tact where we see God as loving and not the author of evil (**Matthew 7:9-11; John 10:10**)

Cons: Weak, defeated God; empowered enemy, empowered man

3) God is all powerful but does not decide all that happens – He has granted authority in *some areas* to mankind.

Pros: God retains his character and His sovereignty and reinforces His desire for relationship with us as He chooses to partner with us in life, allowing us to make some of our own choices and reap the fruit of those choices. **Jeremiah 18:8-10;**

Cons: Some believe this takes away from God's authority, power and sovereignty – attributes they feel are the most important. I'd say God in His sovereignty decided what would happen when He decided that WE would decide what would happen in some instances. Kinda like power of attorney.

*TRUTH #2 - God has given us free will (delegated will). God doesn't decide things for you, He gives you options, tells you what's best, but lets you decide.*

### Why did God create evil?

First we have to define what evil is. Evil is not a thing in itself – it is the word we use for the absence of good/God. Example: dark and light or cold and heat. So God did not create evil, He has allowed through free will the option to not choose good. **Galatians 5:17; James 3:16.** He doesn't create bad things, bad things happen when good is not chosen. Example: God created Lucifer, an archangel, that of his own free will and fueled by pride tried to place himself above God (**Isaiah 14:12-17**). God struck Him down to earth and he is now known as Satan. So, God didn't create him evil. God created him (and all

angels and humans for that matter) with the capacity to not choose Him (which results in what we call “evil”).

*TRUTH #3 – God is not the author of evil. He is the author of choice which can result in the absence of good - evil. “Choose this day who you will serve” – Joshua 24:15*

So if God did not create evil, where does it come from?

Evil happens for three reasons:

- 1) Its a consequence of Adam’s free will choice to live independent from God, thus creating a fallen world. **Romans 5:12; 1 John 5:19**
- 2) Its the logical effect of free will decisions we made independent of God’s will. **James 1:12-18**
- 3) Its the work of the enemy – **1 Peter 5:8,9**

Example – “Marsha’s” child with a cleft palate.

Saying “Marsha, God gave you a child with a cleft palate so you’d draw nearer to Him” seems to be pretty self-serving theology and honestly, pretty cruel. I mean, why Marsha instead of anyone else? So Marsha’s child with a cleft palate wasn’t a personal thing aimed at Marsha or the child by God, but part of an overall general allowance of sin, sickness, and death due to the reasons mentions above. In the end, God allows these things as proof to humanity that our fallen world needs a savior.

Two unscriptural explanations as to why God allows evil:

- 1) Punishment for sin. **John 9:1-4**
- 2) To teach people lessons and draw them closer to Him. **Luke 13:1-8**

*TRUTH #4 – This world is broken and until Jesus comes back, it will always contain pain, injustice and evil. “Stuff happens” is pretty good theology.*

Even if God doesn’t cause evil, He must want evil since it exists, right?

No. There is a difference between allowing something and wanting something to happen. God allows all sorts of things He doesn’t like – ex: **2 Peter 3:9**.

Hypothetical example of Tiff getting mugged while window shopping in NYC at 3am. I let her go knowing it might happen but I didn’t do it, nor did I want it to happen. Big difference.

*TRUTH #5 – Just because God allows something to happen, doesn’t mean it’s His will.*

So if He doesn’t want evil to happen, why doesn’t He just stop it from happening?

Because there is something that is more important than stopping evil right now. Do you want a million bucks? Of course! What if you had to murder Pastor Larry to get it? So then you still want the million dollars but you’re not willing to do what it takes to get it – the life of your pastor is more important. In the same way God desires good for everyone – salvation, health, life – but the violation of free will that would be needed for Him to stop evil is something He is not willing to risk. Why? With out free will (the option to choose) you cannot:

1) Love. **Matthew 22:36-38**

2) Have faith. **Hebrews 11:6**

We'd be slaves, robots without any real connection to the father. In order to truly believe, you have to have the option to not believe. In order to truly love, you have to have the option to not love. Love and faith are the two things you were put on this planet for and you can't do them without giving us the option to choose.

*TRUTH #6 – God allows evil because He will not violate our free will. He is a relational being by nature who wants you to believe that He loves you and for you to love Him back.. This is good news!*

So what has God done to help us?

1) He gives us temporary earthly salvation – **John 14:13, Luke 10:19;**

2) And permanent/eternity salvation. **Romans 8:18-23; 35-37**

3) He'll redeem our pain use it pain to help us and others! **Romans 8:28**

*TRUTH #7 – God has provided the solution to all of the evil in the world. He did this by sending Himself to the cross. When you see pain, sickness, death, injustice and tragedy, don't think "God why did that happen?" think "Thank God that He's saved us from this place!!!"*

**2 Corinthians 12:9,10** - Besides, weakness is good.

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Additional Questions:

If God is loving and good, why was God so mean in the OT?

God seems pretty vicious in **1 Samuel 15** where he instructs His people to kill the men women and children of their enemies. But would you allow an attacker to have their way with your family? He was keeping a promise of protection to his people. If He didn't take out those attacking clans, He be breaking His word. He had to do it in self-defense.

"Why would a loving God send people to hell?" In **Matthew 25:41** the bible clearly states that hell was created for the devil and his angels. See, God never intended to and doesn't want to send anyone there (**2 Peter 3:9**). However if you haven't accepted the free gift of grace through faith in Jesus, there is no other alternative. Technically, God does not send anyone to hell. People end up there essentially sending themselves when they choose to live in the death of their sin nature and don't take advantage of the way of escape God provided through Jesus. Apartment building demolition analogy. God is warning us that the world is passing away (**1 John 2:17**). The demolition has already been scheduled. Don't blame God for hell - *He is the good guy trying to save us from it!* He provided a way of escape.

"So much evil has been done in the name of God and religion." Jesus addresses this in **Matthew 13:24-30;36-43**. Essentially, God knows about the tares/weeds among his true believers (wheat) and He doesn't like it either. They are imposters planted by the enemy. However, He isn't going to uproot the weeds yet because it would cause irreparable

damage to the wheat that's still growing. Know this, the time is coming when all who have committed atrocities in the name of God will get their just reward. Hypocrites, charlatans, the Spanish Inquisition, the Crusades – those who do wrong in the name of God do not get a free pass! The existence of fake Christians never justifies anyone choosing to deny a relationship with Jesus. Don't ever let someone's sin be an excuse for your own!

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