

Evil, Pain, and Suffering: Where is God?

Introduction: One of atheism's most basic arguments in their foolish and ultimately futile rationale is about evil, pain, and suffering. If God is loving, why does He permit it all? Today's lesson is an attempt from Scriptural sources to provide insights into the answer to this question.

Lesson Aim: The Listener Will gain insight and understanding into the question of evil, pain, and suffering as it relates to how God figures into the question and will be fortified in that knowledge.

I. THERE IS A JUST GOD WHO CREATED, OWNS, AND CONTROLS THIS WORLD; ALL OF IT IS HIS – Psalm 50:10-12.

- A. He is not answerable to us – Deut.29:29; Dan. 4:35.
 - 1. He did not to righteous Job even when Job sought to know.
 - 2. If He tried to explain it all, our finite minds would not comprehend.
 - 3. We must bear in mind that it is we who serve God, not He us.

- B. In giving beings freedom of choice, there is the *risk of a bad choice*.
 - 1. God gave humanity the choice of good or evil and the representative of humanity, Adam, chose to know evil – **Genesis 2:16-17**.
 - 2. With choice comes the *risk of choosing a harmful course of action*.
 - 3. In having the right to choose, man has become a *free-will being*.
 - 4. We have become like God, knowing both good and evil, but without the love, knowledge and holiness which restrains Him.
 - 5. It is like giving a child a loaded gun hoping it will do the right thing.

- C. While we may wish to know why there is pain and suffering, world-wide or personal, we may never know the exact reason. What we **MUST** do, however, is to trust that a just, loving, and holy God is in control of it and our destinies, to the betterment of all.

II. WE LIVE IN A WORLD WHOSE COURSE HAS BEEN FOREVER ALTERED BY SIN AND GOD'S SUBSEQUENT CURSE – Genesis 1:31; 3:9-19.

- A. The world God made was originally perfect, free of pain and suffering.
 - 1. All in earth's creation was originally "good."
 - 2. The only source of evil came from outside the world in the form of Satan.

- B. Through Adam's poor choice, sin forever altered the world and all in it.
 - 1. Adam, as representative of humanity, did what any of us would inevitably have done, otherwise we would not have suffered for his sin – **Ezekiel 18:20**.
 - 2. When sin entered the world, so did evil, pain, suffering and all that it entails.

- C. Humanity's sinfulness permitted Satan to reign over it – John 12:31.
 - 1. God cursed the world when Adam and Eve chose badly.
 - 2. Sin allowed Satan to become prince of this world and he is vile.
 - 3. Since sin is the easy choice people invariably choose it and death results.

- D. As long as the world endures it will be an accursed place, far removed from the original intent of it as designed and desired by God. This does not mean He does not care! He has designed a plan to bring us and it all into renewal.

III. GOD IS NOT ABSENT FROM US IN OUR PAIN AND SUFFERING BUT IS FULLY ENGAGED WITH US IN IT – Genesis 6:6; Isaiah 53:4.

- A. He is entirely JUST (righteous) - Romans. 3:26.
1. Therefore, He cannot be unrighteous in any respect.
 2. Whatever happens must happen for the *success of His eternal redemptive plan of salvation, the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*
- B. He is entirely HOLY (pure, free of evil) - 1 Peter 1:16.
1. He cannot fellowship nor abide sin – **Habakkuk 1:13.**
 2. Therefore, He can do no evil whatever His actions or inactions may seem to be within the scope of our finite minds.
- C. He is entirely LOVE (selfless, serving others at cost to Himself) - 1 John 4:8.
1. Therefore, He cannot simply *dismiss our plight; He must do something.*
 2. However, He cannot simply permit *us to destroy the lives of others* He loves free of consequences; He WILL take action – **John 3:16; Revelation 1:1 (DEI).**
- D. He takes an active part in our miseries *for all we are and feel is of Him.*
1. If we feel it, He feels it! All of our sensibilities are of God.
 2. Jesus, the Ultimate Revelation of God, has endured it all (and more!) and emerged victorious from the struggle – **John 16:33.**
 3. He is the great High Priest who can mediate and intercede for us before the throne of the Father – **Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 5:1-3, 5; 7:24-27; 9:11f.**
 4. Therefore, we can obtain comfort in knowing Jesus is always there for us during it all and not lose heart – **Hebrews 10:21ff.**
- E. For Christians, He provides a way of escape that we may bear up under trial and temptation – 1 Cor. 10:13.
1. It is a right and privilege of a child of God to receive this boon.
 2. However, it is up to us to seek the “way of escape” provided.
 3. This could mean many things but it surely means fleeing sin!

Conclusion: The question of “Where is God” is an ancient one, yet one even asked by Jesus Christ Himself (**Matthew 27:46**) on the cross where He suffered and died for all of us. It is a question asked from a purely human standpoint when we are faced with evil, pain, and suffering. It is not wrong to ask it because in His time of pain and suffering, His Son Jesus did.

It is only wrong to charge God with having no concern for us. He has great concern. Yet He does not have to explain Himself to us. We have to trust Him; to believe that He will make things right, for His glory and our good. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a key element in this; one that can and will refresh and renew us when we obey it. Have you and I done that, or, are we still obeying it?