

“WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SUFFERING & EVIL?”¹

Luke 13:2-5 – Slaughtered worshipping Galileans & the tower of Siloam that fell & killed 18 people.

Nazi Holocaust victims. *Did they have bad Karma?* – Shirley MacLaine said yes!
Karma is an explanation, *but is it a good one? Absolutely not!*

cf. William Kirk Kilpatrick, *The Emperor’s New Clothes*, chapter 3 “*The Brahmin in the Bahamas: the Psychology of Selfishness*,” pp. 27-29 (Crossway Books: Westchester, IL, 1985)

Job asked the same kind of questions. “Job was going through endless suffering and wanted to question his Creator. **He believed he was owed an explanation.** However, when God spoke to him, He had seventy questions of His own for Job. After hearing those questions Job laid his hand on his mouth, and said, ‘*I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes*’ (Job 42:5-6). Job’s question about why he was suffering wasn’t so important after he heard God’s questions.” (Ray Comfort, *Why does God Allow Suffering?*” pp. 2-3)

I. **IMPORTANT POINT: ONLY CHRISTIANITY GIVES A PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATION FOR THE SUFFERING AND EVIL WE SEE IN THIS WORLD.** – Gen. 3

A common question: “*But doesn’t a fallen world contradict the idea of a good God?*”

There are really only 4 options:

- A) It would have been better to have no creation.
- B) It would have been better to have people who could do only good. i.e. *make them robots*
- C) It would have been better to have had no good or evil at all i.e. an amoral world.
- D) It would have been better to have made a world with the possibility of good & evil.

A crucial point: Since we immediately invoke a moral framework when we start to talk about good and evil (metaphysically speaking), the real question we need to answer is: *What is the supreme moral ethic?* Most believe it is love, and for love to be seen in the universe, the last option is the best option! In fact love is the supreme ethic because it places value on other people. However...

In order for real love to be seen in the universe, there must be freedom of the will i.e. freedom of choice.

Why? Because...

LOVE demands **CHOICE** which requires **RESULTS/CONSEQUENCES**

II. **BUT COULDN’T GOD HAVE PUT OFF THE CONSEQUENCES?** Answer: If God kept putting off the consequences, then in reality there are no consequences! Which in turn would mean that the choices weren’t real choices. Which would mean that real love would not be able to be seen in the universe.

III. **BUT WHY DID THE CONSEQUENCES HAVE TO BE SO SEVERE?** Answer: *The greater the LOVE... the greater the CHOICE and... the greater the CONSEQUENCES.* The fact that the consequences were so great when Adam & Eve sinned, gives us a tiny glimpse into just how great God’s love is for us.

¹ Compiled by Mike Edwards, Bible Baptist Church, Madison, Ohio, August, 2017 (revised & expanded March, 2022)

IV. **BUT WHY DOESN'T GOD GIVE US A WAY TO GET OFF OF THIS ROAD OF SUFFERING & EVIL?** Answer: *He does!* He sent His Son to die for the sins of every person who ever has or will live, so that they can have a way out of this world of sin & misery & into eternal life in heaven!

God created this universe and our world perfect! Satan, the highest angel at the beginning, rebelled due to pride (Isa. 14 & Ezek. 28). Then he tempted Eve & she and Adam, by their own free choice, chose to cease loving & obeying God (Gen. 3). And the awful consequence or result of that sin (i.e. the fall), horribly ruined God's perfect universe and everything in it (Rom. 8:18-25)

It's as though God created a massive, glorious mansion beyond compare and put mankind in it and told them to live in it & enjoy it forever! But instead of doing so, mankind chose to leave the incredible mansion and go live in a smelly, ill-equipped orphanage, complete with broken windows, lights and plumbing that don't work, no running water, etc.

At that point God could have left us all there. We chose to be there. But instead, out of an unimaginable, incomprehensible, totally undeserved love for those orphans, He, in the Trinity of His persons, came up with "Plan B" to save us from that squallor. So He sent His Son to live the perfect life none of us ever did or could have lived, then He had Him die a brutal death bearing the unimaginable spiritual weight of the sins of all mankind of all time, in order to pay for every single one of us to be able to leave the orphanage!

But shockingly, most of us have chosen to refuse the offer! We say we'd rather stay in the squalor of that orphanage than live in His unimaginably glorious mansion. *Unbelievable!* But sadly, it's true.

But no one needs to remain an orphan. Christ died for everyone who has or will ever live!

Jesus said that hell was not created for mankind, but for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41)! Every human being who ends up in hell will have done so by refusing God's perfect, gracious, all-sufficient, absolutely-free & glorious gift of salvation through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

Don't blame God for those who end up in hell! They can blame themselves for the horrendously foolish, unimaginably horrible choice they made, to reject the payment that could have set them free forever from the orphanage of sin. And, may I add, you too can blame *yourself* if you end up there. Everything that could have been done and needed to be done has been done. It's your choice to accept or reject God's offer. And you alone will bear that responsibility forever!

"...if any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation (payment) for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." (1 John 2:1-2)

"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin... He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3:4-5, 8)

“In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (payment) for our sins.” (1 John 4:9-10)

V. **ANSWERING ATHEISTS & OTHERS WHO CLAIM GOD IS EITHER NOT ALL-POWERFUL OR ELSE NOT ALL-LOVING, BECAUSE THERE IS SO MUCH EVIL IN THE WORLD.**

We need to ask them *where did they get their standard of good & evil from, if there is no God?* If humanism had one unified moral standard it might work, but it doesn't. There are many different standards & pragmatic philosophies of determining what is right and wrong (at least 6-7) e.g. Immanuel Kant's *Categorical Imperative*; John Mill's *Utilitarianism*, Joseph Fletcher's *Situation Ethics*, etc. **But none of them agree.** None of them agree because none of their authors are transcendent. All of them are created, finite human beings, so are flawed. For example, Osama Bin Laden had a moral standard and wanted to force it on the entire world!

Absolute moral law requires a law-giver!

A person may think they are a morally good person. However, when they compare themselves with just the Ten Commandments alone, if they are honest they will find that they come up woefully short of God's absolute perfection!

“Our problem is that we tend to consider our own goodness while we are ignorant of God's perfect goodness, something called ‘righteousness.’ Then when we see what we consider to be evil, we think, ‘*If God was good, He would immediately step in and stop the evil.*’ We criticize His lack of action because we fail to consider something vital i.e. how sinful we ourselves are! ...How many sins do you think you've committed in your lifetime? **With that knowledge, do you still want God to immediately step in and punish those He considers to be evil?**” (Comfort, pp. 4-5)

By the way, why doesn't God step in immediately and destroy all those who are sinners and thus cause evil? Answer: **Because of His great mercy.** (2 Pet. 3:9)

“Hopefully, you have seen that we have no right to demand an explanation from God. [cf. Habakkuk]. Like a good judge, God isn't obligated to give us anything but justice. And so the words that Jesus said to His hearers now make sense. He was saying that the answer to their question about suffering and evil was secondary. **The first question is, will you repent of a multitude of sins that you yourself have committed, or will you remain in rebellion to your Creator and end up in Hell**” (Comfort, p. 6)

“Fortunately, God is rich in mercy and He provided a way for guilty sinners to be forgiven...

Jesus paid our fine. If a guilty criminal has someone pay his fine, the judge can then legally let him go. It is because Jesus paid our fine that God can clothe us in righteousness and dismiss our case. He can commute our death sentence and let us live forever because of the suffering death and resurrection of the Son of God... The moment you come to know Him, you will receive a new heart with new desires... Along with being made a brand new person, you will find that you can trust God with very little effort...

“When you see the love that God has for you (expressed on the cross), you will easily trust Him regarding His allowance of evil and of suffering. **It won't be such a big issue.** You will say to yourself, ‘*God miraculously created my eyes, my brain, my yearning for justice, and on top of that He gave me the gift of eternal life. I'm just a creature, and He is the Almighty Creator. He allows evil and suffering because He has His purposes, and His purposes are infinitely above my understanding. I know that He knows what He's doing, and so I will trust Him with all of my heart, knowing that one day I will get a complete explanation*’ (see 1 Cor. 13:12).” (Comfort, pp. 6-7)

VI. SOME KEY TRUTHS & PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER IN REGARD TO SUFFERING:

- a) We need to bow to God's Sovereignty.
- b) We need to Pray Much—especially when undergoing trials & difficulties.
- c) Praying causes us to look to God for Strength. – “*This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him.*” – Ps. 34:6 “*Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord & He shall lift you up.*” – James 4:10
- d) We should study the great men & women of God in Scripture & how God helped and delivered them. – e.g. Moses, Elijah, Micaiah, etc.
- e) Doing so causes us to get our eyes off our problems and on God instead. – Heb. 12:3
- f) Remember that God alone is Omniscient! We aren't! *We know so little!*
- g) Acknowledge your own Weakness & Insufficiency. That will put us in position for God to demonstrate His power in & through us. - 1 Cor. 1:26-30
- h) We need to remember that trials & difficulties can (& will) make us Stronger... IF we respond correctly.
- i) Get your thinking straight on this Before you encounter the major trials! – Dan. 1:8
- j) Understand that Faith is an absolute necessity to get you through the dark valleys! – Hab. 2:4 cf. Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11 & Heb. 10:38