



ARE YOU READY?



*Daniel Janosik, PhD
Faith Bible College
Apologetics Conference
April 12-13, 2013*

Lecture 5
Why is there Pain and Suffering?

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL




The Problem of Evil!

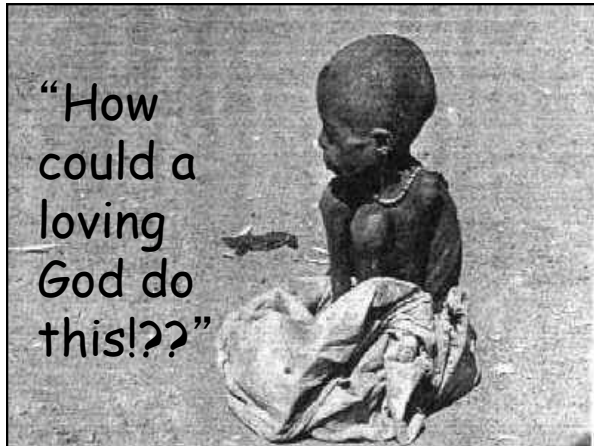
The Problem of Evil

- ◆ If there's a loving God, why does this pain-wracked world groan under so much suffering and evil?



Templeton's Dilemma:





The Problem of Pain and Suffering

- ♦ What would you say to the mother whose child is starving in her arms? How can you tell her that there is a loving God who cares for her?

The Problem of Pain and Suffering

- ♦ If God is all-good and all-powerful, why did He make a world with so much suffering?
- ♦ Why do innocent people suffer from things like disease and natural disaster?
- ♦ If God is so good, loving, and powerful, why doesn't He put an end to suffering now?
- ♦ Did God create evil?

The Problem of Pain and Suffering

If God knew man would sin and bring evil into this world, why did He bother to create him in the first place?

Three Main Concerns

1. For some, the presence of evil proves the absence of God (atheism)
2. Bad things happen to everyone, even those who follow God (it is universal)
3. The problem of evil brings much heartache to the world (where is the happiness ?)

I. A definition of "theodicy" . . .

Composed of two Greek words:

(1) "theos" = GOD

(2) "dike" = JUSTICE

A "theodicy" is an attempt to defend the justice & goodness of God in the face of evil's reality.

Note what elements are required for a satisfactory theodicy:

A belief in the true God

A recognition of the reality of evil

II. Some inadequate theodicies . . .

A. Eastern religions/Christian science: Evil is not real . . .

"Christian Science brings to light Truth and its supremacy, universal mind, the entirety of God, good, and the nothingness of evil." (*Science & Health w/ Key to the Scriptures*, p. 293).

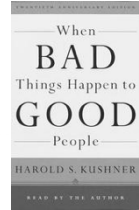
"Since God is All, there is no room for His opposite . . . therefore evil, being the opposite of goodness, is unreal . . ." (*Science & Health w/ Key to the Scriptures*, p. 234).



II. Some inadequate theodicies . . .

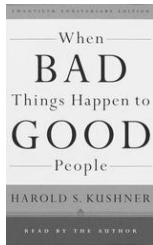
B. Views which compromise GOD . . .

1. Rabbi Harold Kushner's "When Bad Things Happen to Good People"



"I recognize His [God's] limitations. He is limited in what He can do by laws of nature and by the evolution of human nature and human moral freedom. . . . I can worship a God who hates suffering but cannot eliminate it, more easily than I can worship a God who chooses to make children suffer and die, for whatever exalted reason." (p. 134).

"Can you learn to love and forgive [God] despite His limitations?" (p. 148).

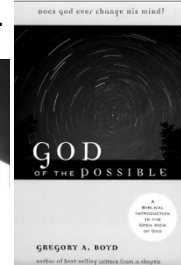


The Jewish scholar Ellie Wiesel said about Kushner's book: "If that's who God is, then why doesn't He just get out of the way and let someone more competent take his place?!"

II. Some inadequate theodicies . . .

B. Views which compromise GOD . . .

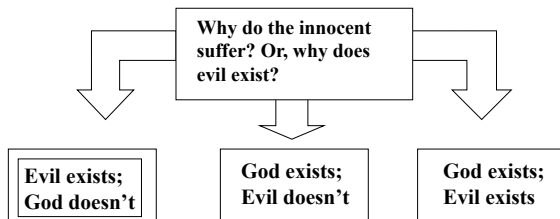
2. Greg Boyd's open theism . . .



" . . . if God foreknew that Adolf Hitler would send six million Jews to their death, why did he go ahead and create a man like that? If I unleash a mad dog I am certain will bite you, am I not responsible for my dog's behavior? If so, how is God not responsible for the behavior of evil people he 'unleashes' on the world - if, in fact, he is absolutely certain of what they will do once 'unleashed'?" (Greg Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God*, p. 10).



Three Options:



Main Objection:

- ◆ Since Evil and Suffering Exist, a Loving God Cannot

Evil Exists and God Doesn't

(Assumption #1)

1. If God is all-good, He will destroy evil.
2. If God is all-powerful, He can destroy evil.
3. But evil is not destroyed
4. Therefore, there is no all-good, all-powerful God

Evil Exists and God Doesn't

(Counter-Assumption)

1. If God is all-good, He will destroy evil
2. If God is all-powerful, He can destroy evil
3. Evil is not yet destroyed
4. Therefore evil will be destroyed one day

God Exists and Evil Doesn't

1. Evil is just an illusion (part of pantheism)
2. To accept this we must deny our own senses
3. The viewpoint is contrary to scientific and historical evidence

God Exists and Evil Exists

- ♦ Finitism:
 - evil is greater than God
- ♦ Dualism:
 - God and evil are co-eternal opposites
- ♦ Theism:
 - God is greater than evil and will one day defeat it.

Finitism

1. God exists
2. If God were all-powerful He would destroy evil
3. Evil is not destroyed
4. Therefore God is not all-powerful

Dualism

- ♦ States that evil is a thing
- ♦ Augustine:
 - "Evil is the absence of something good"
- ♦ Evil does not exist by itself, because it does not exist apart from good
- ♦ "Evil exists as a corruption of some good thing; it is a privation and does not have essence by itself." (Boa)

Theism

- ◆ There is an all-good, all-powerful God, who recognizes the reality of evil, and will one day end evil and restore peace.
- ◆ Jesus Christ is God's solution to suffering
- ◆ [minister and the barber]

Evil Exists and God Exists

1. If God is all-good, He will destroy evil
2. If God is all-powerful, He can destroy evil
3. Evil is not yet destroyed
4. Therefore evil will be destroyed one day

From *The Case for Faith*, by Lee Strobel

INTERVIEW WITH PETER KREEFT

A Bear, a Trap, a Hunter and God

- ◆ In reply to Templeton's dilemma (31):
- ◆ "...that strikes me as intellectually arrogant." (32)
- ◆ God is looking at the ultimate good in our lives.

Quotes are from *The Case for Faith*, by Lee Strobel

A Problem of Logic

- ◆ Christians believe in four things:
 1. God exists
 2. God is all-good
 3. God is all-powerful
 4. Evil exists
- ◆ "Affirm any three and you must deny the fourth, it seems." (Kreeft, 129)

- ◆ Kreeft: "one of those beliefs about him must be false, or we must not be understanding it in the right way"

God is All-Powerful

- ♦ God does not make mistakes
- ♦ In order to give man free will, God had to create us with the *possibility* of doing evil
- ♦ Therefore, God was not the creator of evil, he only created the possibility of evil.
- ♦ Man perpetrates the evil

Free Will vs. Determinism

- ♦
 - $H + E = A$
 - Heredity plus environment equals the human act
- ♦
 - $H + E < A$
 - Heredity plus environment together are less than the human act, therefore
- ♦
 - Heredity plus environment plus free will equals the human act (heredity and environment *condition* our acts, but they do not *determine* them ...they are *necessary* causes but not *sufficient* causes of freely chosen acts.” (Kreeft, 137)

God is All-Knowing

- ♦ We must decide about Dei-cide (39)
 - “The worst tragedy in history brought about the most glorious event in history.”
- ♦ “... the greatest Christians in history seem to say that their sufferings ended up bringing them the closest to God – so this is the best thing that could happen, not the worst.” (40)
- ♦ [Twilight Zone]

The Megaphone of Pain

- ♦ Suffering gets our attention so that we focus on what God is doing in our lives
- ♦ “One purpose of suffering in history has been that it leads to repentance.” (44)

Bearing the Pain

- ♦ Strobel: “Does that mean suffering and evil contain the potential for good?” (45)
- ♦ Kreeft: “Yes, I believe all suffering contains at least the opportunity for good, but not everyone actualizes that potential. Not all of us learn and benefit from suffering; that’s where free will comes in.”

Bearing the Pain

- ♦ God’s answer: the Incarnation (46)
- ♦ “God’s answer to the problem of suffering is that he came right down into it.”
- ♦ Lucy Shaw: “He gained our pain, Himself to drown in it.”
- ♦ We have a God who knows how we feel!

The Power of God's Presence

- ♦ “In fact, it’s significant that most objections to the existence of God from the problem of suffering come from outside observers who are quite comfortable, whereas those who actually suffer are, as often as not, made into stronger believers by their suffering.” (49)

Solutions to the Problem of Evil

1. The nature of spiritual evil is sin and separates us from God
2. The origin of spiritual evil is human free will
3. God allows spiritual evil so that free will may be preserved
4. The nature of our physical evil is suffering
5. The origin of physical evil is spiritual evil
6. God uses physical evil to discipline and perfect us (as well as for punishment and a deterrent to sin)
 - See Romans 8:28-29)

(From Kreeft, p. 142)

Every Tear, His Tear

- ♦ Strobel: The answer, then, to suffering, is not an answer at all.
- ♦ Kreeft: Correct. It’s the Answer. It’s Jesus himself. Its not a bunch of words, it’s *the* Word. (51)
- ♦ Testimony: John Stott (54)

Discussion Questions



- ♦ How have difficulties, challenges, and even pain shaped your character and values?
- ♦ How are you different today as a result of the problems you’ve had to face in life?
- ♦ Can you ever imagine thanking God someday for how suffering has molded you?
- ♦ Kreeft said, “I believe all suffering contains at least the opportunity for good.” Was that true in your case?