

Prayer List

Gene
Veda
Wallace
Sheila
Ophelia

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 9:50 a.m.
Assembly 1:30 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Pinole Tidings

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This Week's Question:

Who had a huge bed made of iron?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Psalms - Psalms 79:3

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The Problem of Evil

Doy Moyer

Of the arguments made against God and the Bible, the problem of evil and suffering stands out as perhaps the strongest of the attacks. It's purpose is to set up a moral dilemma that is supposedly unanswerable. It pits God against the Bible and argues that there is an inevitable contradiction. The reasons why this has been such a difficulty include:

1. It is an apparent proof of atheism because it is attended with demonstrable evidence.
2. It is a universal problem. Everyone has questions about why bad things happen to good people, and virtually everyone will experience pain.
3. It is a practical problem. Real people suffer real pain. It is not just philosophers debating God's existence. It is ordinary people grappling with why a good and loving God would allow them to hurt.

In the days of Gideon, the Israelites were being oppressed by the Midianites. Their crops were being destroyed and the people were suffering. God assured Gideon that He was with him, but Gideon replied, "Oh my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?" (Judges 6:12-13) This is the problem posed by suffering.

The Bible affirms that God is both all powerful and all loving. This is the reason for the problem, and the argument basically may be stated as follows:

1. Evil exists.
2. If God exists, who is supposed to be all-powerful and all-good, then He would be powerful enough and good enough to abolish or prevent evil.
3. Since evil exists, then God is either not all-powerful or all-good; therefore, the God of the Bible does not exist.

So then how may Christians approach this? Our purpose here is not to get caught up in big terms and philosophical debates. We want to be able to show people that even though evil exists, God, who is all-powerful, still loves them completely. When someone is in pain, asking why God would let it happen, we need to be able to show that in spite of the pain, God is still there, and He cares. Following are some suggestions to trigger thought on this. Space does not permit a comprehensive look at the issue, so these thoughts are suggestive.

First, think about what evil is, and why it exists in the first place. In the context of this issue, “evil” generally refers to “bad things” that happen, as when one suffers pain or loss. Death is one example, and the Bible helps us understand why these things exist. Evil entered the world because of sin, and sin is the result of people making the wrong choices. So God is not directly responsible for suffering and death at all. He created the circumstances that allowed for it, but an understanding of human free will is essential to this issue. The abuse of free will resulted in the entrance of suffering into this world (see Genesis 3).

Second, if someone is seriously trying to use “evil” to argue against God, then let the person define what the standard of “good” and “evil” is. One cannot have it both ways. If “evil” is a problem, then it is a problem only because there must be some standard by which it can be judged. Yet this is the very thing they argue against. So when one brings up “evil,” it

presents an opportunity to point to the Standard of good. The atheist who thinks he is setting up the unanswerable dilemma is unwittingly putting himself in a spot. We are very willing to talk about good and evil. It gives us opportunity to talk about God more.

Third, if God is all-powerful, He is also all-knowing, and we are not. So we must allow for the fact that there are reasons we do not know or understand, but God does. If, in His wisdom, He allows for suffering to exist, He is not under obligation to explain Himself (see the book of Job!). We should not use our lack of knowledge to make foolish arguments about God.

Fourth, the most compelling answer to the problem of evil is Jesus Christ. Jesus is God, and He came to this earth and suffered for sin. The great passage in Romans 8 (vv. 31–39) answers any question about God’s love and power. What Paul essentially says is that, because of what God has given in Jesus, there is nothing that should be able to convince us that God does not love us. No amount of pain or suffering will argue that God does not love us, for He demonstrated His love completely through the sacrifice of Jesus. An answer to the problem of evil would be incomplete without going back to Jesus Himself.

Finally, there will be a day of reckoning. God will convincingly demonstrate His power over all evil in the final judgment. So there is a time coming in which all things will be dealt with according to God’s righteousness and justice. Evil will not win out in eternity (see Revelation 20:11–15).

There is so much more that can be considered. These thoughts are intended to provoke further thoughtfulness and study. It is also helpful, for example, to consider the actual benefits that come to one who overcomes evil and suffering. But as in all these matters, you are urged to search them out, study them, and finally put your trust in God, who is all-powerful and all-loving. Jesus can give us the comfort and strength we need to overcome any trial (Hebrews 2:18).