

How to Make Sense Out of Evil and Suffering in This World

The Scriptures make it plain that God did not create the world in the state in which it is now, but evil and suffering came as a result of the selfishness of man. When God created the world, it was absolutely perfect. A perfect God made a perfect man and woman, and set them into a perfect environment, then gave them perfect freedom: the ability to choose. There is a reason why God made man perfectly free, including free to sin.

The Bible tells us that God is a God of love. We were created to have fellowship with God and enjoy Him forever. Most of all, He desires to have a loving relationship with us. But love is meaningless if we are not free to choose to love and follow God! Scripture tells us that we are the bride of Christ and He is our bridegroom (Rev.29:9; Matt.25:1-13). No bridegroom wants a "forced" relationship. But genuine love cannot exist unless freely given through free choice and will, and thus man was given the choice to accept God's love or to reject it.

God could have made angels and man so that they could not sin, like He made the stars to remain in their orbital positions. But He made us free agents, not robots. Without this freedom, His creatures would not be able to truly love God, for then they would only be programmed to love Him. God wants love that comes from a willing heart. He is not a God of force. He gave us freedom to choose whether to obey or disobey, to love or to hate.

This choice made the possibility of evil becoming very real. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they did not choose something God created, but by choice, they brought evil and suffering into the world. God is neither evil nor did He create evil. If God had not allowed for the possibility of evil, mankind would be serving God

out of obligation, not choice. God did not create us as robots. We are not being guided down here on earth by a little string. He said, "I'm going to create you, I'm going to teach you how to live but it's going to be your choice as to how you carry that out." Man brought evil upon himself (deceived by Satan) by selfishly choosing his own way apart from God's way.

God gave Adam and Eve choices. He said here in the Garden of Eden, you can eat of any tree in this garden; there is just one tree that you can't eat of and that's the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. On the day that you disobey Me and determine that you have the ability to determine right from wrong and good from evil on your own, apart from Me; you are going to die. You're going to die spiritually and be separated from Me and later you're going to die physically. (Genesis 2:16-17)

If God destroyed evil, He would destroy our freedom. For you see, we must have the ability to choose evil. If we are not free to choose between good and evil, then we're not free and our choice is no "choice" at all. He would have destroyed our capability for the highest good: for His creatures to choose to love Him and serve Him freely.

Yesterday's curse

Because of the fall of Adam and Eve, the world now is abnormal. Things are not in the state that they should be. Something is desperately wrong in this world! Sickness, suffering, starvation, war, genocide, hate, crime, sorrow and confusion fill our age. Man, as a result of the FALL, has been separated from God. Nature is not always kind to man and the animal world can also be his enemy. There is conflict between man and his fellowman. None of these conditions were true before the fall from grace of Adam and Eve. Any solution that might be given to the problems mankind faces must take into consideration that the world as it stands is not normal.

Now, when Satan deceived Adam and Eve and perverted humanity

through them, sin entered into the world. When sin entered into the world the Bible says that even nature groans for its redemption. Everything fell; man, nature, animals, and we became depraved people. So today we are born into that depraved condition and still have choices but prone to make the wrong ones. That is why God had to come to rescue us. He saw man in his fallen condition, without any hope. Man did not have a chance or ability at all to correct or rectify the situation and obtain salvation. We were lost, spiritually separated from God, and that is why Jesus left His royal robes of heaven to come down to earth, to enter into His own creation to become Emmanuel; God in the flesh, and dwelt among us. He became man just like us and became the atoning sacrifice for our sins and came to offer us hope, salvation, reconciliation, and life eternal. Speaking of Jesus, John the Baptist said, "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*"

Tomorrow's conquest

Although evil and suffering is here and it is real, it is also temporary. Evil and suffering will eventually be destroyed. This is the hope that the believer has. There is a new world coming in which there will be no more tears and pain because all things will be made new (Rev. 21:5). Paradise lost will be paradise regained. God will right every wrong and put away evil and suffering once and for all; in His time.

When Jesus returns again, the curse will be lifted. Hallelujah! All of creation, waiting with outstretched arms, will be changed. "*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kids; the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them (Isaiah 11:6).*" Ultimately, God through Christ will triumph over it all.

Today's comfort

Today "*the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain*" under the curse, and we groan as part of it (Rom.8:22). But this is not the

end of the story! Paul doesn't deny our suffering; he faced them all and assures us: *"The suffering of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory, which shall be revealed in us..... And we know that all things work together for good to them who are the called according to His purpose (Rom.8:18, 28)."* Paul concluded *"in all things we are more than conquerors (v.37)."* The groans we endure are temporary. The glory we expect is eternal. Paul assures us that *"Nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (v.39)."*

On a final note, we should know that in this world, we are going to have trials and tribulations. We cannot escape them. But God uses these to teach us compassion so that we can reach out to others. That's how God works in our circumstances together for our good. Isn't that great news! Hallelujah!