

Foundations 2
Why Does Evil Exist in God's World?
March 8, 2009
Roger Miller

During the next two weeks we'll be looking at what the Bible has to say about the fact that good and evil exist alongside of each other in the world today. Our goal is to focus on Biblical truths, not on philosophical arguments.

Every generation for the last sixty years has had an event occur that they will never forget. It is a bookmark on the hard drive of their memory. The World War II generation, still living, remembers exactly where they were December 7, 1941, when they heard about Pearl Harbor.

For the boomer generation, the singular event we remember occurred on November 22, 1963, when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. I still remember walking back from the library to my sixth grade class, where another classmate came running down the hall screaming, "President Kennedy has been shot."

Then the buster generation had an event seared into their memory on January 20, 1986 when the space shuttle Challenger exploded in a ball of fire before a nationwide television audience.

Now the millennial generation has their own signal, yet tragic, event

and date which will always remind them where they were and what they were doing when it happened-September 11, 2001, when the greatest single tragedy ever to hit this country occurred, now known as "America under attack." Once again we are confronted with the great question: "Why?" **Evil** has once again reared its ugly head to confront those who believe in God and to impassion those who don't. The problem of **Evil** has been called the "Achilles heel" of Christianity. The question arises-How can a God who is all-powerful and absolutely good, allow **Evil** in His creation?

George Barna, the leading researcher of spiritual trends in the evangelical world conducted a national survey in which he scientifically selected a cross-section of adults and asked this question: "If you could ask God only one question and you knew He would give you an answer, what would you ask?" The number one answer was this: "Why is there pain and suffering in the world?"

Years ago after survivors of the United Airlines Flight 232 crash in Sioux City, Iowa, attributed their survival to God, an organization of atheists, known as the Freedom from Religion Foundation, issued a call for secular newspapers to quit using "Bible Belt journalism."

Ann Gaylor, leader of the group said, "Every time a tragedy is reported our members must brace themselves for the inevitable. If there are survivors reporters will make sure God' will get the credit, but never

the blame why don't they ask these religionists who claim God helped them, why He let tragedies happen in the first place?"

Referring to the United crash she asked, "Why didn't their omnipotent God just fix the hydraulic system of United Flight 232 and save everybody?"¹

This question goes all the way back to the oldest books of the Bible.

Our goal today is to focus on Biblical truths, not on philosophical arguments. So **WHY DOES EVIL EXIST IN GOD'S WORLD? Three truths...** Here is the First one. . .

1. God is Good.

God is Good

For the LORD is good and his love endures forever: his faithfulness continues through all generations. Ps. 100:5 NIV

God is the ONLY source of goodness

Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. Mark 10:18.

c God's ACTIONS are good..

God created and called it good And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and He separated the light from the darkness. Genesis 1:4

God is the giver of all good things

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. James 1:17

Anything that is GOOD, comes from God. If it's not from God, it isn't good. If something isn't good, it didn't come from God. It doesn't matter how good it looks ... how good it feels ... how good it tastes ... if it doesn't come from God, it isn't good. AND ... if it isn't good, it didn't come from God.

Coconut didn't come from God ... BUT Licorice did! There will be no CoconutsS in Heaven! Adam & Eve had no Coconuts in the Garden of Eden ... they came after the fall of man ... a result of the CURSE upon the earth! Coconuts will be the main course in Hell ... Heaven will be full of Licorice.

I'm talking tongue in cheek, of course ... because I have always been repulsed by the texture of Coconuts ... But I love licorice.

The TRUTH is (as much as I hate to admit it) CoconutsS are GOOD

for you. They even teach us a spiritual lesson here this morning.

GOODNESS IS NOT DETERMINED BY EXPERIENCE, BUT BY

ITS SOURCE. I've had a bad EXPERIENCE after Bad Experience with

coconuts. They hide them in perfectly good pieces of chocolate or

cakes But that doesn't determine whether coconuts are GOOD or

BAD. GOODNESS is determined by its SOURCE, not by

EXPERIENCE. Licorice tastes good ... it makes me feel good ... it

makes me happy. BUT ... Coconut isn't good for me. EXPERIENCE is

not the STANDARD for GOODNESS.

EXPERIENCE is not the STANDARD for GOODNESS. Every GOOD

thing has God as its source. God only produces that which is GOOD.

We might USE IT for a BAD PURPOSE (marijuana, cocaine, alcohol)

... BUT ... GOODNESS is determined by its SOURCE, not by

EXPERIENCE.

How do we answer the fact that God is good ... yet bad things

happen? ANSWER: If it isn't good, then it didn't have its source in

God. YES, God is sovereign ... He is in control. God ALLOWS bad

things to happen for reasons that we don't have a clue. BUT ... God didn't participate in their sin in any way, form or fashion. God is good!

Our problem is, we use the wrong STANDARD for "goodness" ... we use OUR standard. OUR standard is: "Good" is whatever is "good" for me. We say: "I am the standard for GOOD". GOD says: "I am the standard for GOOD."

2. God is All Powerful

The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD thunders over the mighty waters. The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic. The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon. Psalmcs 29:3-5

I would venture to say that the Creator of the Universe is plenty powerful, wouldn't you?

BUT, did you know there are some things God CANNOT do?

Wait just a minute, Preacher! Didn't you just get done saying God is all-

powerful?

Yes, but hang on. Let me list a few things God cannot do, and you will see where we are going in a bit.

First, God cannot lie, according to Numbers 23:19. James tells us that God cannot be tempted, nor can he tempt people to sin.

In **other** words, God cannot do anything out of His character. The reason God cannot lie is because He is truth. He cannot sin or tempt to sin because He is pure.

He also can't undo the past, create a square triangle, or make what is false, true.

So what do we make of all this? God is good and He is all-powerful to perform any and all things within His character, and yet we have evil.

Why?

That's a real problem for us, because we live in a "the public has the right to know" generation. We live in a society that demands an explanation for everything, and we want to be informed on everything from what type of dog the Obama's are going to buy; to what happened to Sarah Palin's wardrobe; and if the white house is out to get Rush Limbaugh. We get frustrated because though journalists and fortune-tellers and lawmakers operate by that policy, God does not. He

operates strictly on a "need to know" basis.

It's interesting that every time tragedy strikes, we call God on the carpet and demand that He explain Himself, and He had better have a good reason for doing what He did. Well this next statement sounds hard, but it's still true- because God is God, He doesn't need to explain His actions to **anyone**.

Listen closely to this next sentence, because it forms the basis of the answer, and I will explain it in more detail as we continue. This is going to be a little on the theological side of things, so track with me.

God could not eliminate evil without eliminating the possibility of accomplishing other goals that are important to Him.

God created humans in His own image, capable of having and sustaining a personal relationship with Him. But **to** really be in His image, they have to be capable of freely loving Him and following His will without being forced.

BUT, creatures who are free to love God must also be free to hate or ignore Him. And when people act in ways outside the will of God, great

evil and suffering is the ultimate result.

God is capable of destroying evil - but not without destroying human freedom.

Professor Norman Geisler has an interesting take on this, that I like.

He says that the free choice of humans is the source of evil. He used the analogy of rust. Rust does not exist on its own - it is part of the metal. The same is true with evil. It does not exist on its own - it is part of our makeup as a result of the fall.

So, the reason God doesn't destroy evil is because He would have to destroy US as well. So this brings us to the next truth. . .

3. The world is evil.

"Their sentence is based on this fact: that the Light from heaven became into the world, but they loved the darkness more than the Light, for their deeds were evil." John 3:19 (TLB)

"Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you..."
1 John 2:15 (TLB)

Now we hit the crux of the question: If there is a God, and if that God is good, why is there **Evil** in the world? Thousands of years ago the

Greek philosopher, Epicurus, put it this way:

God either wishes to take away **Evil**, and is unable; or He is able and unwilling; or He is neither willing nor able; or He is both willing and able.

If He's willing but unable, He is feeble, which is not in accordance with the character of God.

If He is able and unwilling, He is envious, which is equally at variance with God.

If He is neither willing nor able, He is both envious and feeble, and therefore not God.

If He is both willing and able, which alone is suitable for God, from what source then are **Evils**? Or why does He not remove them?

That word "why?" is not just a question. It is really an accusation. In fact, the Hebrew word for "why," is not only a cry of sorrow, it is a cry of protest. It assumes that all suffering is unjust and that God's silence is inexcusable.

It is an age-old question. We're not the first ones to ask it, nor will we be the last.

How can all of these things be true?

A lot of theological and philosophical jargon can be summed up in one simple sentence: "There is no LOVE without CHOICE."

God could have made a person who would never have chosen to sin,

but then he would have been denied the opportunity to choose to love.

Conclusion: Two other truths to remember:

"God is sovereign" and "Mankind has free choice."

How do you reconcile those two? If God gives us choice doesn't that put us in control rather than Him? Our God is an awesome God! He is able to give us as a part His creation a free will to decide.... and yet still remain in complete control of His creation. How does He do that? He is God!

One warning to you - be sure to keep these truths in balance. If you lean too far towards God's being in control, you come down on the side of fatalism: it doesn't matter what we do. If you lean too far towards man's free will, you come down on the side of humanism: we are in control of our fate.

The problem of evil is, indeed, a problem, and not one to be taken

lightly. But it doesn't have to leave us in defeat and bitterness.

We can take it with the understanding that our good and all—powerful

God is also all-loving.

He has our best interests at heart. And He sees the bigger picture.

It is the same with God. He sees the BIG picture.

Trust Him in the present and look forward to the future.