

The Problem of Evil and Suffering

The Battle of Different Worldviews
Thoughts by Pastor Joe K. Taylor



If God is all-powerful and all-loving,
then why is there evil and suffering in the world?

Thoughts by a Pastor:

1. Why Do You Ask?

Are you intellectually looking for an argument?

You realize that the biggest reason for people rejecting Jesus Christ as Lord is likely to be over the issue of evil and suffering in our world. Let me give you something to consider.

Are you curious about God, but have legitimate concerns?

I want to support you in your journey. Maybe you've been hurt, maybe evil and suffering have come your way, maybe you have good questions and are truly seeking. The Bible says, "...Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." (1 Pet. 3:15) Let me give you something to consider.

Are you a believer who has been affected by evil and suffering?

Hear me! God has not abandoned you. Evil and suffering do not have the final word—your God does. What you're walking through is real, and God is not asking you to pretend it isn't painful. Remember, God is with you in it, He will carry you through, and He will redeem what evil meant for harm. What God allows, He will redeem. Hold on to Him; He is holding on to you. Let me give you something to consider. *I want to help!*

2. What is Your Worldview? *It Matters!*

If God is loving, then He would stop all evil and suffering. If he was powerful, then He could stop evil and suffering; since evil and suffering exist, then there must be no loving and powerful God.

- David Hume (1711–1776), in *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

His argument against God is evidential, but it is also wrong!

The **biblical worldview** says, "**Evil and suffering are a result of man's free choice to sin, Satan's rebellion, and a world marred by both.**" I'll expound on this worldview later, but if you disagree, what is your worldview? How are you coming to your conclusion?

A. The worldview of Atheistic Naturalism: This is the belief that there is **no creator God, and the **physical universe is all that exists.****

In this worldview, all things came into being by chance: no god, no creator, no purpose, no right and wrong, no moral absolutes; the view that only natural (physical) reality exists and that supernatural explanations are unnecessary. Specifically, evil and suffering are random for no reason.

Put simply, life sucks and then you die.

B. The worldview of Eastern Transcendentalism: The belief that ultimate reality is an **impersonal spiritual force found through karmic incarnation. In this worldview, evil and suffering are not real—they are an illusion along with the whole physical world. It is the basis for many Eastern religions, new age thinking, Christian Science, Dianetics, Minds Sciences, etc.**

Put simply, evil isn't evil and suffering isn't suffering.

C. The worldview of Finite Godism: In this worldview, there is a **god who exists, but is limited in power and in his/her ability to love. Many philosophers note two subcategories of the finite god: (1) He is either powerful, but not loving or (2) He is loving but not powerful. Rabbi Harold Kushner, in his book, *Why Bad Things Happen to Good People*, presents the same thought, saying, "There is a loving, good God and he suffers when people suffer...he does feel our pain...However, the reality is he is just not powerful enough to always do anything about it... He can't always answer our prayers, he can't stop all suffering, and he can't stop all evil. He is loving, but not powerful enough to do something about it."**

3. A Brief Response to These Worldviews.

To the Atheistic Naturalist: It is God who gives meaning, purpose, ultimate hope, and strength for our lives regardless of what we endure. Your argument against a creator god can't be based merely on the **scientific method**; the Christian philosopher will offer valid responses. Your conclusions must respect the **evidentiary method**. You offer claims, but even science is not on your side in most cases. The evidentiary method gently exposes that atheism is not a neutral default, but a worldview that must also account for the origin of the universe, objective morality, reason itself, the historical evidence for Jesus, the witnesses to and scientific support for even the miracles of the Bible. Jesus lived, Jesus died, and Jesus rose. Jesus' life was witnessed by many historians who document these facts. Jesus is historically anchored.

To the Eastern Transcendentalist: Holy God is personal, relational, and knowable. Only in Christ do we find truth for our minds, peace for our soul, hope for the future, forgiveness from the past, and power for the present. Does the answer for all things evil lie within you? How can genocide, human trafficking, murder, gross injustices, and even your own suffering not be real? Do you really think that your mind has the power to help you escape all suffering? *How's that going for you?*

To the Finite Godist: God is sovereign, powerful, and victorious. Be careful not to make conclusions based solely on your experiences. A limited god can't be the source of the absolute morality you are basing your argument on. Christianity insists that morality is grounded in the unchanging character of an all-holy, all-wise, all-powerful God. A finite god cannot serve as the foundation for objective moral truth. If God can be wrong or weak, morality collapses into uncertainty. Your argument fails because God is all-loving and all-powerful. Christianity's answer is not a weak God, but a sovereign God who enters suffering and redeems it through the cross.

4. A Christian Worldview.

The **biblical worldview** says, **evil and suffering are a result of man's free choice to sin, Satan's rebellion, and a world marred by both.**

Christians know that God will one day punish evil, alleviate all suffering, and provide a perfect and eternal place for all followers of Christ.

Christians believe that right now, God offers to forgive sin, give wisdom for spiritual attacks, and personally be with the believer to strengthen

them during life's trials. For the believer, it's not a question of **if** God can alleviate evil and suffering, but **when** that relief will come.

We know that our God is patient and does not want any to perish. (1 Pet. 3:9) Therefore, He delays His rescue of the Church so that others can be saved by placing their faith in Jesus Christ alone.

A Christian sees all of life through the inerrancy of Holy Scripture as guided by the Holy Spirit living within them. Therefore, a Christ-follower believes God is the Creator and Ruler of all things, that human life is valuable and is made in God's image, that sin has broken our world, that Jesus Christ came to save the world, that the spreading of the Gospel is imperative, that Scripture is the ultimate authority for our beliefs and actions, and that history is moving toward God's promise of restoration.

5. A Word to the Hurting Christian.

- A. Christianity is not a vaccine that immunizes us to problems and suffering in this world.
- B. Jesus never promised you that you would never endure the storms of life. He did promise you would never be alone in those storms of life. God is with you right now.
- C. Suffering is part of living in a fallen world. (Mark 7:21, Rom. 8:22)
- D. Suffering is unrelated to personal goodness. (Matt. 5:45, Luke 13:1-5)
- E. Suffering amplifies this message: *We need a Savior!* (2 Pet. 9-10)
- F. What God allows, He redeems! *Here is a foundational passage for you.*

Study Verse Section—Romans 8:28, NASB95 - ²⁸ **And we** *as Christians know intuitively and can experience personally* **that God causes** *lit., "harmonizes" all ie., every single one* **things to work** *we get our English word "synergy" from this word* **together for good** *lit., "the good"* **to those who (1) love God, and (2) to those who are called according to His** *ie., eternal* **purpose.**

- i. There is always something CONFIDENTIAL about trials.**
"And we know"
- ii. There is always something COMPREHENSIVE about trials.**
"... that God causes all things ..."
- iii. There is always something CONSTRUCTIVE about trials.**
"... that God causes all things to work together for good..."
- iv. There is always something CONDITIONAL about trials.**
"... to those who love God (and) who are called...to His purpose."

"Oh, Child of God, don't leave our faith. The trials and difficulties we face in life should be a reminder to us all that 'this world is not our home; we're just a pass'n through.' If life was too good here on Earth, we might have a thought of wanting to stay here and miss Heaven. Suffering is a witness that we left the Garden. Suffering is the impetus for the believer to long for Heaven—not Earth." - Pastor Joe