# The Problem of Evil

Walking with God through Pain and Suffering, Chapter 4

Tim Keller

# The Definition of Evil

1.  Not good morally: WICKED
2.  Arising from actual or imputed bad character or conduct

Miriam Webster, 1967 edition


1.  Morally reprehensible: SINFUL, WICKED
2.  Arising from actual or imputed  bad character or conduct
3.  Causing harm: PERNICIOUS
4.  Marked by misfortune: UNLUCKY

Miriam Webster, 2015 edition

# Biblical Definition of Evil

1. Hebrew "ra" meaning "bad" or "wicked".

2, Greek "kakos" meaning "bad", "worthless", "depraved", "wicked"

# The Origin of Evil

"You were in Eden, the garden of God;

You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you.

You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.

Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor.

So I threw you to the earth"

Eccles. 28:13-17

Satan, the Day Star, son of Dawn fallen from heaven

# Two Kinds of Evil

1. **<u>Moral evil</u>** is evil committed by human beings through the use of free will and includes crime, cruelty, class struggles, discrimination, slavery, genocide, and other injustices

2. **<u>Natural evil</u>** involves things that 'just happen'. Moral agents are not responsible for natural evil such as tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, and other natural destructive events.

# A Contradiction in Terms

According to the skeptic, the one who believes in the existence of God cannot reasonably affirm all three of the following propositions:

1. God is omnipotent (all powerful)
2. God is perfect in goodness, and yet
3. Evil exists

Do you agree?

"Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then why does evil exist? Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God."

Epicurus

# Defenses to the Contradiction of Evil

- Realizing the extreme difficulty of arguing conclusively that the existence of evil makes God impossible, skeptics have taken an easier path by claiming merely that <u>evil makes the existence of God less likely.</u>

- However, theists have produced strong defenses that show the existence of evil actually makes the argument for God <u>stronger</u> rather than weaker.

# Noseums Defense

- Simply because we can't see a good purpose behind various kinds of evil doesn't mean God doesn't have one, Deut. 29:29

- Many examples can be given of apparent evil that brings about a greater good, i.e. a doctor giving a flu vaccination, police killing a bomb laden terrorist, Tom and Jerry

- Can you think of biblical examples where God allowed evil to happen in order to bring about a greater good?

# Biblical Examples

- Joseph being imprisoned unjustly in Egypt  in order that lives could be saved, Gen. 45:7-9

- The Egyptian army being drowned in the sea so Israel could escape on dry ground,  Ex. 14: 14-28

- The sufferings of Job and God's blessings on the later part of his live, Job 41:11, 42:12-17

- The crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to provide eternal life to those who believe in Him, 1 Cor. 15:1-5.

# Chaos Theory Defense

- Scientists use the word 'chaos' to indicate simple things that behave in complicated and unexpected ways—things that surprise us and confound our ability to predict how they will behave in the future.

- In truth we live in an enormously complicated universe where tiny differences in structure may produce completely unexpected results

# Chaos Theory Defense

- In a classic example of chaos theory, it has been claimed that the fluttering of a butterfly's wings in China could impact the path of a hurricane in the South Pacific.

- Therefore, if the tiniest changes can have drastic and unexpected consequences, it is entirely possible that an all wise and all powerful God could use what appears to be totally pointless evil to achieve good goals.

*For want of a nail the shoe was lost.*
*For want of a shoe the horse was lost.*
*For want of a horse the rider was lost.*
*For want of a rider the message was lost.*
*For want of a message the battle was lost.*
*For want of a battle the kingdom was lost.*
*And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.*

# Free Will Defense

- God created mankind with free will which includes the possibility of choosing evil.

- The only way that God could destroy all evil would be by destroying all freedom;

- Moral evil is the result of man's choice to engage in acts which are evil.

- Freedom from evil and sinning will only be granted mankind in heaven.

"It is men, not God, who have produced racks, whips, prisons, slavery, guns, bayonets, and bombs,"

C.S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain, p.89

# Boomerang Effect Defense

- The atheist will make the claim that even if some evil has a benign or good purpose there is certainly evil that is so horrific that it prevents the possibility of God.

- It is evident that human beings are wired with a moral code that tells them when something is wrong.

- If there is no God, where do we get our beliefs concerning moral behavior and evil?

"A man who has no assured and ever present belief in the existence of a personal God or of a future existence with retribution and reward, can have for his rule of life, as far as I can see, only to follow those impulses and instincts which are the strongest or which seem to him the best ones"

Charles Darwin

# One God Defense

- The Lord is God and there is no other God nor will there  ever be any other God, Deut. 4:35, Isa. 43:10-11.

- Only God is holy and without sin, Rev. 15:4,

- 1 John 1:5,8.

- If only God is holy and without  sin and there will never be any other God, then he could only create creatures of a lesser order than Himself, i.e.  Man is not God and therefore through his free will can perform evil acts.

# The Christian View of Evil

- Evil is the corruption of the good things which God created, Gen. 1:31.

- Evil first came into the world through the exercise by Lucifer of his free will in seeking to elevate himself above God, Isa. 14:13, Ezek. 28:15.

- Mankind became corrupted when Adam exercised his free will to disobey God's command, Gen. 3:1-7.

- Nature became corrupted through man's fall and God's sovereign will, Gen. 3:17-19, Rom. 8:20-22.

- All will be renewed when Christ returns, Rom. 8:22-24, Rev. 21:1-4 and evil will be no more, Rev. 21:27.