

Tactics

How Could God Allow Suffering?

The Problem of Evil

Have you ever thought, or heard someone say, “How could God let this happen?”

Some think that the reality of Evil and Pain in the world means that there cannot be a good God as Christians believe. How do we talk to them?

Differentiate between

1. The Logical Problem of Evil
2. The Emotional Problem of Evil

These two problems are different and require different treatments. One requires logic, the other requires compassion, a listening ear, or helping hand.

The Logical Problem

Some think (or feel) that there is a contradiction: God and Evil cannot both exist. This thinking can be summarized as follows:

1. God is All Powerful
2. God is All Good
3. There is Evil and suffering in the world.

But this does not show a logical contradiction. So, we can tease out what they mean by it further:

1. If God is All Powerful, He could do something about the Evil in the world.
2. If God is All Good, He would do something about the Evil in the world.
3. Yet, there is Evil in the world, so God is either not All Good or He is not All Powerful.

Even philosophers, at this point, do not think there is a logical contradiction in the existence of God and Evil. Because, if it is even *possible* that God has a morally sufficient reason for permitting Evil and pain, then there is no contradiction whatsoever.

What is Evil anyhow? Why do we suffer?

The vast amount of Evil and pain in the world experienced by humans, is caused by humans.

We have the freedom of will to commit evil, to hurt one another, and hurt ourselves. And we do. God permits this.

Probability

Some thing that, even if the logical problem of Evil does not show that God is a contradiction (ie, cannot exist), that the sheer amount of Evil and suffering show that it is improbable that God exists.

But how can we know such a thing? Our perspective, compared to God's, is astonishingly limited. God has an infinite mind and would know whether or not there is a reason to allow Evil and pain. We could not know this.

This argument against the existence of God, which is actually the most powerful argument, fails to show that God does not exist. So, it is good to look at the positive arguments for God's existence, and the evidence for the life of Christ.

The positive argument for Atheism fails. The positive arguments for Theism succeed.

The Christian Answer

The Christian answer to the problem of Evil is Christ. God is not far away, untouched by our pain. Some belief systems pretend there is not evil, or that suffering is actually not real (an illusion). Christianity acknowledges that Evil is all too real, and explains why. Yet, God did not disregard our pain. In Christ, God entered into our world, and suffered with us. He broke death, and will, one day, make all things right. The entire Scriptural narrative is one of Redemption.

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

Revelation 21:4

This is Faith.

The Stone in the Shoe

What Christians Can Do

Embody the solution.

Love our Enemies. Let the pain, vitriol, etc end with us. Rest in God's grace in our own lives. Give to charity. Be genuine. Give the Gospel. Help in the community.