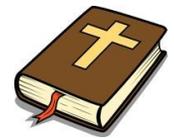


Evil, Pain, and Suffering?

He just kept thinking, "If God is so kind and loving, and if He is all powerful, why does He allow innocent people to suffer and die?" He came face-to-face with a problem that practically every person eventually encounters: If there is an all-powerful God, and if He is all-good, then why do bad things happen to innocent people? Many have abandoned their belief in God because of the presence of suffering in their lives or in the lives of those close to them. Some have lost children, others have seen friends die, and some have uttered what they feel are unanswered prayers. Faced with terrible events, they have concluded that there is no God.



Who is recorded to say "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding"?

When unbelievers share that a loving God would never allow evil, pain, and suffering to exist. They conclude that if God does exist, He must be unloving. If an all-powerful God allows evil, pain, and suffering, then He must not be all-powerful or He would stop the evil, pain, and suffering. Is this an unanswerable truth? Are we without a reasonable answer? To this query we must first ask the skeptic, "Where do you find the declaration of God being all-powerful and loving?" Is this an observation all on your own or did it originate outside the scope of human intelligence?

Paradoxically, the existence of evil actually proves the existence of God. Consider this: (1) If God does not exist, then objective moral values do not exist. (2) Evil exists. (3) Therefore objective moral values exist, that is to say, some things are really evil. Thus, God must exist. Although evil, pain, and suffering seem to call into question the existence of God, on a deeper more fundamental level, they actually prove God's existence.

When the Word of God is used to claim there is an all-powerful and loving God, then use the same source in a discussion about His existence. Where does the idea originate that God is all-powerful? Genesis 17:1 says, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless." Or see Matthew 19:26 where Jesus said, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." And the same principle applies to the idea that God is all-loving.

Yet, when an appeal to the Bible is made for an answer to evil, pain, and suffering, some people object. They say we should not use the Bible; but they do not realize that **they** had to use the Bible to formulate the problem. After all, if the Bible did not teach that God is all-loving and all-powerful, then this alleged problem would not exist in the first place. We can and we must access the Bible record to find the solution to evil, pain, and suffering.

God has always giving human beings the privilege of making their own decisions. Good or evil, right or wrong, the decisions are ours to make. Much of the suffering in this world results from the decisions made by humans beings. It is often the misuse of the freedom given in past generations. In Romans 5:18 we read, "Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life." Mankind—not God—is to blame for much if not all of the suffering in this world.

Yet, do not conclude that ALL suffering in this world can be blamed on past generations. Each of us make right and wrong decisions. We bring pain and suffering upon ourselves. What you and I do today determines what our life will be like tomorrow. In Luke 13, Jesus speaks of a tower that fell and people died. Did they die because they were more wicked than others? No, they died because of the natural laws established by God. Gravity exists, but not as a random arbitrary system. People may suffer pain and death while gravity remains functioning as God intends. Would you blame God for gravity, if a loved one plummeted to their death based upon a decision made?

There are times when pain and suffering is beneficial. Think of the beginning of a heart attack, or an ache within the body indicating appendicitis. Pain often sends a person to seek medical attention rapidly. Tragedy, although causing pain and suffering, can also produce the most treasured traits known to mankind—bravery, heroism, self-sacrifice, love—all flourish in less than ideal circumstances. Isn't that the point Jesus is making when He said, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13)?

The evil, pain, and suffering endured in this life is difficult to understand at times. But please remember that our time on earth is brief (see James 4:14). "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Jesus also declared "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you" (John 15:14). Yes, evil, pain, and suffering happens, but that doesn't mean God cares for you and me any less. The real question is: Are we His friend?

To all our visitors: *Please feel free to participate!*

You should expect to hear singing with voices only, a few "family" announcements, prayers spoken, and see the Lord's Supper offered, then free-willed giving, and gospel preaching from the Bible. Any response is up to you and will be kindly received.

We are glad you decided to worship God with us on this first day of the week!

Birthday/Anniversary Lunch: 2nd Sunday...

NMCCH: Spray & Wash and Bar Bath Soap (pick up **April 6, 2019**)

Friday Bible Study: (1/18) at 7PM. Romans chapters 1 through 6.

Singing: at Morton Street, Tuesday (1/22) at 7PM.

VBS Planning Meeting: Sunday (1/27) immediately after AM service.