

The Problem of Evil, Suffering, Sin, and Death in the World – and the Existence of God Part II

Written by: Dr. Eddie Bhawanie

The Scripture teaches that *shame* and *sorrow* are equally pervasive on the planet. After the Fall into sin, and shame, the Almighty told the woman –Eve, that He “. . .shall greatly multiply her sorrow and her conception” (Gen. 3:16). This is also translated ‘sorrow in her conception.’ The pains in childbirth are a symbol of that *sorrow*. The man, Adam, was saddled with *sorrow* after the Fall, also. The symbol of that sorrow is seen in the divine judgment: his exhausting labor in the sweat of his face (Gen. 3:19).

God’s plan involves: sin, sorrow, suffering, and death. Job is the star witness on trial. The truth is, God is a sovereign God, and Job declares, after the vicious attacks by Satan on his family, his possessions and himself, “The Lord gave and the Lord took away. Blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21). The Bible makes very clear, “. . .there is no evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it” (Amos 3:6). This means: The Almighty uses existing evil for His good!

Sin, suffering, affliction, tribulation, adversity, and death are fully part of the plan of God. The crucifixion of Christ was the greatest sin that has ever been committed. God came on earth, through His Incarnate Son—Christ, for the purpose of experiencing human suffering and bringing redemption. (To redeem is to emancipate, to free, to liberate, to release from captivity of sin). But did suffering come as a surprise to God? **No!** This **suffering** (including Jesus’ crucifixion) was an intricate part of “the determinate counsel of God” (Acts 2:32; 4:27-28), which took place before the creation of the universe (Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:18-21; Rev. 13:8), and was revealed at Calvary. God controls and determines all of history according to the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:5). God is able to bring good out of *evil, pain, and suffering*, says Joseph (see Genesis 50:20, and Rom. 8:28).

Christians are called to participate in the suffering of Christ (Phil.1:29). The Almighty uses suffering as a means of redemption. Christ is the Suffering Servant who triumphs over the world through the means of suffering. Christians embrace suffering not to gain merit (as some other religions teach), but to identify with Christ’s ministry to those who are in pain (see Rom. 5:1-8).

The non-believer using the objective, visible problem of sin, evil, suffering and death as an argument **against** the existence of God does seem to be logical. Horrible pain and suffering, on the planet **cannot disprove** the **objective** existence of God; however, suffering on the planet is an **even greater** problem for non-believers. Why? It was C. S. Lewis who rejected the idea of God because of human suffering and cruelty. Then he came to realize as an atheist, in the end, that the presence of pain, evil, and suffering was for him, a better argument for God’s existence than one against it.

“My argument against God was that the universe seems so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of “just” and “unjust?” . . . What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust? . . . Of course I could have given up my idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of my own. But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too—for the argument depends on saying that the world was really unjust, not simply

*that it did not happen to please my private fancies. . . .
Consequently atheism turns out to be too simple.”¹*

Lewis points out that objections to the existence of God are based on accusing indictments, by bitterly analyzing human injustice and suffering. The non-believer judges the natural world on the basis of: injustice, unfair, and unjust –these as Lewis points out, are their objections against God and His existence. If the atheist, the pagan, and the non-believer are *sure* that this natural, physical world is unjust without equity, and filled with evil, then, they are *assuming* the reality of some extra-natural or *supernatural standard* by which to judge.

The grim aftermath of mankind’s Fall and rebellion, is not only universal guilt and pollution, but untold misery, evil, and suffering as both the natural consequence of human sin and the ensuing Divine judgment by the Creator.

The problem of *pain* and *suffering* has implications for Biblical apologetics as well. Apologetics is not simply after the intellectual alone. The Gospel and, the Scripture, are always aimed as arrows; and they are aimed at the heart of the individual, in order to reach the *whole person* (the mind, will, and intellect) with a view toward repentance, with a demonstration of behavioral change, which should evidently bring practical godliness into the life of the obedient believer (see Acts 2:14-42).

Summary:

The existence of *evil* and *suffering* does *not prove* the existence of God, nor does it *disprove* God’s existence. In fact, evil and suffering in the world point to *good* in the universe. While the Christian cannot fully explain the existence of evil and suffering in the world, that is no reason for us to disregard the positive evidence for God. The Christian may not be able to explain away evil, but we are encouraged to be aware of the influence of evil (1 Pet. 5:8-10).

There is yet another significant *proposition* to the existence of *evil* and *suffering* and *death* in this world –and that is: there is only One Book (The Bible), one philosophy, one religion, one faith, that offers a reasonable answer for the problem of pain, suffering and death, and *that is the* Christian worldview. However, outside the Christian worldview, in all the worlds of thought, whether the East, the West, the ancient, the modern, --only the Bible offers any reasonable explanation for evil and suffering! There is *no other* answer or explanation.

Is God more glorious because of evil and suffering, or is He less glorious? He is not glorified at all by evil. Evil and suffering, certainly fit into the scheme of God’s sovereignty and into His infinite, eternal plan. Suffering is related to sin; but people do not always suffer in direct proportion to their sin. (Remember Job). The ultimate question of suffering is, “Why don’t we all suffer more than we do?”

According to Scripture, each human being will be judged by his *words* (Matt. 12:35-37), and by his *works* (Rev. 20:12-13) at the final judgment. The Judge who will execute judgment is Christ (John 5:22, 27, and 30). The final “judgment of God is according to truth” (Rom. 2:2). What Truth? Whose Truth? The Truth here is pointing to ‘revealed Truth,’ [a] “revealed Truth,” that is *known*, and when ‘*known*’ and is

¹ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (Macmillan, 1960), p. 31.

'understood,' man 'buries *God's revealed Truth* in his depravity, debauchery, and wickedness' (Rom.1:18). Why? Because he *hates* it!

At the final Judgment, there will be the great vindication of the living God. All unbelievers will have their mouths stopped, and every one of their attacks and defenses will prove to be useless. Believers, on the other hand, will have their mouths stopped as well, except to praise God, as they cannot but acknowledge God's wisdom and power (Rom.11: 32-36; Mark 13:26).

God's awesome glory, perfection, immutability, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, sovereignty, wisdom, knowledge, love, grace, mercy, holiness, justice, compassion, wrath, etc., etc., --all will be on full display for all of humanity to see.

In the final Judgment, all of mankind (with all their works and words) will come into full display face-to-face with the totality of world history, all of the evil, goodness, ugliness, suffering, beauty, in the full-orbed display of God's Grand Exhibition. ***All of mankind will come to know that*** all the evil, all the goodness, all the ugliness, all the suffering, all the beauty, are / were interrelated with God's great plan in creation. This will indeed, be overwhelming. The vision of glory will accompany everyone throughout eternity whether in the gloom and the agony of hell without God's '*conscious presence,*' or in the celebration, and enjoyment of heaven with the living God.

Following the Judgment, the two populations (the *lost* and the *saved*) will come face-to-face with the fullness of God's glory, and they "Will bow and acknowledge Christ as Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11), and the saved and the lost will not be able to efface, wipe out, or obliterate, God's grace or God's justice from their memory.

The *lost* will experience, and deservingly so, God's unending justice, banished from the presence of the face of God. The *saved* will eternally display the glory of God in their faces throughout all their eternal existence –through Jesus Christ.