

Whose Evil is it Anyway?

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.” (Rom 5.12-15)

Introduction

- ❖ Last week we looked at the Moral argument for God’s existence as the moral law giver. We observed that according to scripture we have God’s law written on our hearts. From this we come to know the difference between right and wrong, just and unjust, good and evil. It is precisely this awareness that gives rise to one of the greatest challenges to Christianity. Known to most as the problem of evil or the problem of pain and suffering. Encapsulated in the age old question; why do bad things happen to good people?
- ❖ This is one of the most run to arguments against the God of the Bible. Due to the fact that we have God’s law written on our hearts and we know there is something innately ‘wrong’ with certain actions and the world in general. Most Theologians have written extensively on the issue of sin and evil. The Bible deals with this issue regularly; it is one of the central themes in scripture. Yet, many say that the existence of evil is the death blow to scripture. This is because virtually every person knows what evil is. They have seen it, heard it, felt it, but what is it really? Where did it come from? How do we fix it? Why must we be so affected by it? Countless questions arise when dealing with this problem. It is a fascinating and heart wrenching topic, but one question reins above all others. Where is God when things go wrong? We seem to see a contradiction in the evil we observe and an all good, powerful, and caring God.

The Argument from Unwarranted Evil

- ❖ We have been dealing with arguments for God’s existence, but is there arguments against his existence? While there are many negative arguments in favor of naturalism there are very few positive arguments.
 - It may be beneficial to define positive and negative arguments here. Pastor Ross states in his lesson *God Made All or No God At All* regarding positive and negative arguments that...
 - *“In the realm of ideas there is a difference between a positive and a negative argument. A negative argument sets forth all the reasons why someone else’s position is wrong. Whereas a positive argument seeks to set forth in persuasive terms why ones’ own position is correct.”*

- In other words you can think of Positive as offensive arguments where you find evidence and proof to support your claim. While Negative is defensive in the sense that you try to steal or block their arguments.
- Again from Pastor Ross
 - *“The main argument against believing that there is a God is surprisingly simple on the surface. The atheist’s main argument reasons as follows:*
 - *If there were a God, there would be no evil in the world. (From the concept of God)*
 - *There is evil in the world. (By observation)*
 - *Therefore, there is no God.*
 - This is a valid argument. Which means that if both its premises are true, then so is its conclusion. The weight of the argument rests upon the first premise which asserts that the existence of both God and evil is impossible.”*
- So the atheist whole argument rests on an apparent inconsistency in the concept of the Christian God and the existence of evil. I would like to point out two major things that we will observe more fully in these lessons on evil.
 - That Evil is an internal problem. That is to say only if God exists at all can evil exist. Only if he exists can there be talk of inconsistency. On this point we will survey the scriptures to see what they have to say.
 - The second point is that Evil exists and even the atheist can see and know it does. As we see time and time again they lament evil things that happen.

Definition of Evil

- ❖ Evil Defined – If you look up evil in a dictionary like Webster’s you will find a definition similar to
 - Evil, n. Evil is natural and moral. Natural evil is anything which produces pain, distress, loss or calamity, or which in any way disturbs the peace, impairs the happiness, or destroys the perfection of natural beings. Moral evil is any deviation of a moral agent (a person) from the rules of conduct prescribed to him by God, or by legitimate human authority; or it is any violation of the plain principles of justice and rectitude.
 - Webster then gives two types of evil those of nature and those of moral agents or persons. In both cases though evil is defined in its relation to the good. It is a disruption of good or a departure from it. Evil is always described in this way, because it is nothing without the good to depart from and compare it to.

- C.S. Lewis in *God in the Dock*, Chapter 1 States “The moral difficulty is that Dualism gives evil a positive, substantive, self-consistent nature, like that of good... If evil has the same kind of reality as good, the same autonomy and completeness, our allegiance to good becomes the arbitrarily chosen loyalty of a partisan. A sound theory of value demands something different. It demands that good should be original and evil a mere perversion; that good should be the tree and evil the ivy; that good should be able to see all around evil (as when sane men understand lunacy) while evil cannot retaliate in kind; that good should be able to exist on its own while evil requires the good on which it is a parasitic in order to continue its parasitic existence.”
 - Lewis believes it is inappropriate to define evil as something substantial on its own merits but always needing good to exist at all. While the opposite is not true of the good. Good, can exist alone.

Biblical View of Evil

- ❖ So then what does the Bible have to say about evil?
 - Gen. 1.26-31 – As the Bible opens we are faced with a beautiful garden, a peaceful utopia, where God and man and beast live in harmony. Sounds nice right? But is this what we see today? No, what happened?
 - Gen. 3.1-19 – Well we humans screwed it up big time. Here we learn that sin enters the world through Adam and Eve. So many lessons can be learned here but we are concerned with the effects of this event. This entering of sin and the curse forever changed God’s creation. Things now began to age and die. Diseases and pestilences came into being. Mutations and malefactions crept in. What once was very good is now cracked and stained. Our once leisurely existence is now a struggle and fight, a tooth and nail battle for survival. When one stops to think about it, almost every scientific achievement is to try to alleviate the effects of sin on this world. The mega industries of health and fitness, medicines, machinery to do work, pesticides, farming equipment, even weapons all try to take some of the burden of survival off us.
 - Someone might ask at this point, “why did God allow them to eat the fruit and disobey?” I believe this is because God desired real love from his creation. And love properly defined is – A choice to yield to the best interest of another. Love requires choice. Since God is love he chooses to love us but we are his creation. If he did not give us the ability to choose, how then could we love him? As Jesus said “If you love me keep my commandments” In his mind love is shown by a choice to do what he tells you is right.

- John 15.12-13 – “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Here Christ says that the greatest way we can show love is to lay down (voluntarily) our lives for the ones we love. The greatest love is self sacrifice, although it doesn’t always have to be our physical lives literally laid down.(else we would all be dead or never love) It means a life lived in service to others often. This though requires a choice, to lay it down or run away, to serve or to demand service.

- Some might say well what about Calvinist and the lack of freewill?
 - This is a troubling position for many reasons. Here especially since the Biblical answer to sin and evil always assumes and acts like we have a choice. For example in James 1.13 we see that God cannot be tempted with evil (his very nature does not allow for it) nor does he tempt any man to commit evil. How, if he does not even tempt us to sin could he ever ‘predestine’ or better yet coerce us into sinning? He would have to if we had no free will, but then who is culpable for the sin? Us who were forced or him who forced us? This is clearly not a coherent position if I am to take scripture seriously since vs 13 is followed by vs 14 which says “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of **his own** lust, and enticed.” The Bible says we are responsible because we are drawn away and make the choice all on our own. Read the books of Moses. How many times do we read God saying to his people “Do this and I will bless you, but do this and I will curse you.” Clearly God knows that men have a choice to whom they will yield. If you take away freewill you take away the whole story of love and redemption. Christ’s sacrifice would have been meaningless as a substitution since he would have been the guilty one before he ever came to earth. Our sin would never have been ours to pay for. This, however we know is not the case.

- Others still may ask why create Satan though? He seems to be the one who started it all going bad, surly God could have done without him right?
 - This is an interesting one and I believe several reasons could be stated. However I will limit it to what I believe the most important role he has played which is making sure Christ was crucified. This was accomplished only by God keeping a secret from him. That his death would be an atoning sacrifice once and for all. I Cor. 2.7-8 Satan played a major role in the fall and redemption of man. He became a pawn in a

chess game against the master, unknowingly playing right into God's perfect plan to show his perfect love and justice.

- All the physical consequences of the fall are bad. But are they the worst of the consequences? Not by a long shot. God promised that on the day they disobeyed they would die. But this was not talking about an immediate death of physical body but a spiritual death. An inevitable separation from God. Our sin separated us from God, as he is Holy and sin cannot abide in his presence. This is why we were destined for hell. This leaves us in a dire and hopeless situation if this is the end of the story. Thank God that it isn't though!
 - If someone asks "why would God create/send people to hell?"
 - Hell was not created for man. As stated in Matt. 25.41 Hell was prepared for Satan and the fallen angels. But we humans inherited it from our new father Satan, the god of this world. Eph. 2.2-3 We all were children of wrath and disobedience and walked according to our father Satan. This is why hell is our final destination without Christ.
 - To the second part of why send people there the answer lies in another area of God's nature. The part many don't like especially when it comes to themselves. God is love and everyone likes that one, but God is also just. Most do not like the latter. They love to picture God as a jolly, old fat guy who never allows bad things to happen to anyone, but never want to picture him as someone to be feared and respected. They cannot fathom why people who aren't "that bad" deserve hell, and by human standards and reasoning without the Bible I can see why they think that way. God's holiness demands that they cannot abide with him in heaven, and his perfect justice demands they accept him or face their sentence.
 - As we can see this leaves us in a desperate situation. Described in Eph 2.11-12. We did not have God and were hopeless. And because of our sinful nature and following after 'the god of this world' we are destined for Hell. So we have no peace in life no hope in death and evil is all around us. Clearly we need help.
- There is Hope found in Christ. Heb. 7.17-22 Christ is a better hope than the law. Rom. 6.22-23 – There is freedom from sin! And it is found in the free gift that is offered in Christ. Where we screwed it up God made a way for us to again make a choice.
 - Rom. 5.8-12 Even as enemies Christ died for our sins and brings reconciliation and joy.

- This salvation though is for the time being a spiritual one and not a physical one. Unlike what some may teach and preach more faith does not equal less trouble. In fact those who would live godly will suffer more.
 - II Tim. 3.12 – Assures us that all who will live godly in Christ will suffer persecution in this life.
 - John may help shine some light on why this may be in part. In John 15.20 Christ warns his disciples that just as he was persecuted his disciples would be also. The servant is not greater than the master if Christ suffered in life why would we be magically spared?
 - In John 3.19-21 we find that the reason the world hated Christ was because he was light and revealed their evil nature. Darkness hates the Light.
 - We are called to walk as children of light in Eph. 5.8 as being light in Christ and called to walk as such it makes sense to me that the world should hate us for displaying the same light that made them hate Christ.
 - Rom 8.35-39 even though we are promised tribulation and evil we have hope in the love of Christ
 - Those who teach that Godly living means gain or ungodly is manifested though calamity are not rightly dividing their Bibles for Job understood this when he was accused of secret sin and ask in a sense if so then why do the heathen prosper? Job 21. 7-16 Evil people succeed in life all the time. This is also opposed in I Tim 6.3-9. Here the whole health and wealth ministry is addressed that wealth should never drive ministry and those who follow after this are heretics.
- The Bible also assures us that evil is worldwide.
 - Job 5.6-7 All men are born unto trouble and see affliction.
 - Job 14.1 – yet a few days and full of trouble
 - Matt. 5.43-45 The God who lives does not respect persons but allows good and evil to happen to all. As in Acts 10.34-35, Rom 2.9-11, Eph 6.7-9, Col 3.23-25, In this life we may receive both good and evil but in the end those who do good in Christ will receive good and those who do evil will in turn receive evil that they are justly due.

- Evil in the moral sense does not come from the Lord.
 - Job 1.2, 10 remember that evil has a larger meaning of things not pleasant to us which God allows to happen. Notice his wife's response, blame God.
 - James 1.13-17 God does not create evil or tempt us to do evil. But rather God gives good things.
 - Acts 14.15-18 God suffers us to make our own decisions. Sometimes the evil we face is because we are stupid and make bad choices.
 - Rom 1.18-32 God gave them the ability to decide for themselves and gave them a witness.
- God also has a plan to deal with evil once and for all.
 - Rev 20.10- 21.6 death and hell and all unrighteous confined to the lake of fire.
 - I Cor 3.11-15 the righteous will be rewarded
- The end is better than the beginning
 - Rom 8.16-23- this suffering not even to be compared to what awaits the believer.
 - II Cor 4.16-18- a far exceeding and eternal existence await those who make the choice to accept Christ.
 - A world fallen then redeemed is better than no world at all. Through the fall God was able to demonstrate his perfect love, justice, mercy and grace. Without the fall he could not have done this.
- ❖ In conclusion I believe we have demonstrated by the scripture what evil is, where it originated, what problem it causes for us, its remedy in Christ and God's future plan to once and for all eradicate it. Next week we will look at what the Atheists say is the real problem evil poses for Christianity. The reason we are spending time on this is because this is one of the only actual arguments people use to say there is no God. This is probably the most common one you would ever deal with, and is hardest to explain since it has multiple sides. There is a logical side and an emotional side. The logical side is easier to deal with for class purposes. The emotional is a little trickier.