

**WHY BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE?  
HOW CAN EVIL EXIST IN A WORLD CREATED BY A  
GOOD GOD?**

*Excerpts from notes used in presentation on the Problem of Evil  
By Ronnie W Rogers*

**I The Problem**

1 Books

(1) “When Bad Things Happen to Good People” by Harold S. Kushner, 1981

A Jewish Rabbi, dealing with the news that his three-year-old son, Aaron, was diagnosed with “progeria” (rapid aging) on the day his daughter was born.

B The book’s premise is that people do not deserve to have bad things to happen to them, and God does not cause bad things to happen nor is He able to stop them; they are caused by fate.

C Another book concerning bad happening to good people is entitled, “What Happens to Good People When Bad Things Happen” by Robert A. Schuller, 1996

(2) The better, and more biblical question to ask is, “why do good things happen to bad people?”

A This is in fact a rebuttal of the very premise, which Kushner’s book advocates.

2 Problem stated: God claims to be good, evil is bad, How can a good God “create” or “allow” evil?

(1) If God did not claim to be good, there would be no problem

(2) You have been hurt or will be hurt. How will you handle the hurt?

A Woman loses her baby

B Bombing of the World Trade Center

C Drunk driver hits you

**II Solutions Proposed**

1 Pantheism, (Hinduism, forms of Buddhism, Taoism, Christian Science, Scientology, and Theosophy) generally denies the existence of evil.

(1) “If God is all, and God is good, then anything evil must not really exist”<sup>1</sup> because if it existed it would be God and God would not be good; hence, consensus of pantheism is that evil is unreal.

2 Atheism denies the existence of God based on the premise that the evidence for the existence of evil is undeniable.

(1) God is all good

(2) Evil is not good

(3) A good God would eliminate evil

(4) Evil has not been eliminated

A Therefore, God does not exist.

3 Deism states that God is good but He does not intervene and evil flows from man.

4 Finite godism—Polytheist, Kushner, Openness theist, some emergent church leaders, etc. They all deny the existence of an all-powerful good God

(1) God is good, but unable to know the World Trade Center was going to be blown up or could not stop it, but did want to if He could.

(2) Kushner says, “...God doesn’t want you to be sick or crippled.... He didn’t make you have this problem...but He can’t make it go away. That is something, which is too hard even for God.... Fate not God sends us the problem.”<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> When Skeptics ask, Geisler, p44

- 5 Christianity says God is all-loving, all-powerful, all-holy, and the existence of evil is real.
- (1) Therefore, God does intervene to stop and/or turn evil into good for those who love Him, and He will ultimately destroy all evil. Natural man is time bound in his thinking, and does not understand, or accept, that God's timing and the timing of men are quite different.
- A The Atheist proposition, "Evil **has not** been eliminated; therefore God does not exist is answered thusly;
- a God is a good all-powerful God. Therefore, evil **will be** destroyed.
- (A) To state is another way, just because evil *has not* been done away with does not mean or logically necessitate that evil *will not* be done away with.

### III The Biblical explanation of the problem of evil:

Which is stated such as: "Why do bad things happen to good people" or *Why does a good all-powerful God allow evil in the world? Why did God let my baby die? Why did God let me lose my job? Etc.*

Sergeant Friday on the old television series, *Dragnet*, quite straight forwardly says, "Just the facts ma'am." Of course it was poor acting, but turned out to be a memorable line.

- 1 This is the only possible moral world that could have been created
- (1) Four possible moral worlds
- A **Not** create a world. This is not a moral world.
- B A world where man **could not** sin. This is not a moral world since there is no free choice.
- C A world where man **would not** sin. This is logically possible but not actually achievable.
- a It is logically possible to have free will and not sin—Adam and Eve did it before the fall.
- b However, not everything that is logically possible is actually achievable or becomes reality.
- (A) It is logically possible that America lost the Gulf War, but that is not actual reality.
- c If man were programmed to not sin, would that be a free choice? NO!
- d As far as having free choice, it would be the same as making a world where man **would** surely sin. No one would see that as freedom.
- (A) Freedom involves the possibility to do otherwise.
- D A world where man **could** sin if he **chose** to, but he does **not** have to sin.
- a Therefore, the only possible created world with free moral agents is the one we have.
- b It is not the best of all possible worlds, but it apparently is the best way to get to the best of all possible worlds.
- (A) Freedom is preserved in that each person chooses their eternal destiny
- (B) Evil is overcome once those who reject forgiveness in Christ are judged and cast into eternal separation from those who are redeemed.
- (C) These decisions are permanent, evil is quarantined, good is confirmed, and sin ceases.<sup>3</sup>
- (a) The ultimate goal of a perfect world will have been achieved.
- E The skeptic cannot figure out how to make a better world where there is moral freedom—which necessitates the ability to make real<sup>4</sup> choices—and no evil. Since they cannot, it is unduly arrogant to question God.

<sup>2</sup> P129

<sup>3</sup> Some decisions are permanent e.g. jumping off a cliff. Free does not mean to be free to choose from all possible choices, but from actual available choices, to make an unfettered choice, but some choices have permanent consequences: marriage, Adam and Eve, suicide, salvation, etc. In addition, all choices exclude one or many other choices. Keeping your options open can result in paralysis and/or missed opportunities.

(2) Why did God give us free will and allow us to misuse it?

A Peter Kreeft, “One gives a polish to a table, or a pony to a schoolboy, but one does not give three sides to a triangle or free will to a human being. Free will is a part of our essence. There can be no human being without it. The alternative to free will is not being a human but an animal or a machine.”<sup>5</sup>

B A human being is created in the image of God as a free moral agent—free to choose. To take free will from humanness is to destroy a human being. It is like trying to make a circle out of a triangle. You end up destroying the triangle.

C God loves us and desires for us to love Him. Love is an act of free choice.<sup>6</sup> In order to destroy evil, one must destroy choice; love, and mankind, which would deprive mankind of his greatest good—love.

a Therefore, true free will requires the possibility to choose otherwise, i.e. follow God or not follow God.

(A) To not follow God is sin—all sin is seeking to place ourselves above God.

(a) One may choose to do wrong but only God is in a position to determine the wrongness of the wrong and the penalty.

(B) The penalty is death. God said to Adam, “for in the day you eat from it you shall surely die.” (Genesis 2:17)

(a) Man was no longer holy, on the level of communion with God.

(b) Result of ungodliness is death.

i. Therefore, evil happens because this world is the only possible world, and humans by nature have a free will, which they abuse, and the only way to eliminate that is to eliminate man in this creation, which is really an answer to the problem of evil at all.

2 The Bible is clear that all humanity has sinned

Romans 5:12 “death spread to all men because all have sinned.”

(1) Romans 3:10 ff, “as it is written,” THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE... THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE... WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,”

(2) Jesus asked the rich young ruler, “Why do you call me good?” (Luke 18:19ff)

A Jesus was indicating that either the young man had misused the word, since God alone is good, or calling Jesus good meant He is God; or therefore one should respond to Him accordingly.

B God who alone is good and untainted by sin is the only one in a position to determine what is truly good or evil, and who deserves what.

---

<sup>4</sup> By “real choices” I mean to say that a human being has the actual ability to choose a course of action or to have chosen otherwise. This is the libertarian view of free will; but from a biblical perspective, the libertarian view of free choice is limited by the fall of man and the consequences of sin. Moreover, because of the sinfulness of man, and all of the effects of the fall, while man can make many choices, he is not totally free in any choice because of his fall induced proclivities and susceptibility to temptations; still further, man is absolutely incapable of choosing God—making spiritual decisions that honor God—based on his own volitional choice that are unaided by God; however, man is afforded a “real” choice to choose to follow Christ or not to follow Him when the Holy Spirit enables him through divine conviction (John 16:8).

<sup>5</sup> Handbook of Apologetics, p3 Logos

<sup>6</sup> “As a society of consumers, we define choice ‘not as the freedom to choose one course of action over another but as the freedom to choose everything at once.... Freedom of choice means keeping your options open’. However, in real life every choice of any consequence inevitably rules out a whole series of other options. It is literally impossible to ‘keep your options open’ and live a life of any significance.... Unless the choice carries with it the possibility of making a difference, of changing the course of events, of setting in motion a chain of events that may prove irreversible, it negates the freedom it claims to uphold.” This is from the book “Truth Is Stranger Than it Used to Be”, J. Richard Middleton & Brian J. Walsh, p59

- a In addition, He is the only one outside of the problem and therefore capable of doing something about it.
- b We are within the framework of that which has been distorted by sin
  - (A) Consequently, we are not in a position to say if a person truly deserves what happens to them.
    - (a) They may not deserve what particular evil happened—hit by a drunk driver—but they do deserve a far more terrifying event—hell.

(B) Therefore, the problem, “WHY BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE” is stated inaccurately. It is based on the false assumption that we are good and do not deserve.... The real question is, “WHY GOOD THINGS HAPPEN TO BAD PEOPLE”

The answer: *God is love and blesses the righteous and the unrighteous, and He will deliver those who trust Him, and will judge and eradicate all evil one day*

(C) The Bible makes it clear that we all deserve eternal separation in hell.

(a) The Bible asserts that all have sinned. The results of sin are death and separation from God in hell (Romans 3:10-23) .

i. Therefore, everything this side of hell is a good day.

(3) We use our free will to hurt others and ourselves. The only way at this time to completely stop that is to destroy freewill, i.e. man.

3 The world, nature, is fallen—corrupted. (Genesis 3:17 & Romans 8:22).

(1) Therefore, everything is dead or dying, standards are skewed, the mind, morals, will, biology, psychology, ecology, zoology, astronomy, ad infinitum is corrupted.

A The earth still has good because it is not totally corrupted

B Man still does some good, civil good, because the image of God is corrupted but not destroyed.

C However, because of sin, the earth and man birth and perpetuate havoc.

4 Satan, demons, John 10:10 “The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have *it* abundantly.”

5 False religion causes problems

(1) India, “Indira Gandhi herself (prime minister of India 1980-1984) said there is enough resource in India to feed that nation entirely and then export two-thirds of all that it produces.’ Only fifteen percent of the harvestable land on the globe is being farmed, and only half of that every year.... 660 million people in India. They worship as many as 330 million deities.... cows eat 20% of the food supply in India.... Every cow eats enough for seven people. Fifteen percent of the food supply of India is eaten by mice, but nobody kills mice either, because they might be killing a relative...”<sup>7</sup>

6 In a morally free world, good things like water, medicines, etc. bring blessing and hurt—you can swim in the water but some will drown.

7 God topples evil, at times, and some think that good was toppled e.g. Babylon, Germany.

(1) Good is called evil by some.

#### IV **The evil or hurt is not without benefit**

1 Benefits of personal hurt in this world—it helps people not to become so comfortable in this world that they do not prepare for the next.

<sup>7</sup> (MacArthur in Matt 24:4-9 messages, Jesus’ Pattern of prayer.)

2 Without evil and consequences of actions, both seen and felt, we would never listen to God's message of redemption since we would see no consequence of actions, or accountability for such. Hence, we would wander right into eternity with our sin. Hurt and loss cause us to face our finiteness, future, mortality, and the need for a reckoning.

(1) Like pain lets you know you have a problem so that you will stop the precipitating behavior before it is too late.

3 If you were isolated from pain

(1) You would have no compassion for those in pain.

(2) This would be heaven, and this is not heaven.

4 There is something worse than death - that is death without God.

5 Demonstrates, to some degree, the seriousness of sin.

6 Problems create an environment to create solutions.

7 Faith demands silence from heaven (the Bible is full of silence from heaven in calamity).

(1) The greatest example of this is when Jesus hanged on the cross and cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" The response was utter silence from heaven.

#### V **The end of evil, experience of peace, and confidence for the future.**

1 Atheism offers no resolution of the problem of evil, or a real standard to judge what is evil and what is not since they deny the existence of God.

2 Deism offers no real justice since evil is never dealt with. They believe everyone will stand before God and their good and bad works will be weighed, but they offer no solution for dealing with the bad—evil.

3 In Pantheism, evil is never dealt with because it really does not exist; you just go through endless cycles of reincarnation, which never deals finally with sin.

4 Finite godism, the gods are not capable of dealing with all of the problems they are posed with; therefore, they never eradicate sin.

5 Christianity solves the problem of sin and evil, and gives hope to all.

#### VI **God will work everything for the good and wipe away every tear.**

1 Salvation - available to all, by faith in Christ (John 3:16) because God is love and mercy.

2 Justice - God will balance the scales of justice, (Revelation 20:11-15) because God is holy.

3 Re-creation – (Revelation 21) because God desires man to live forever in the best.

(1) That is the best news anyone could deliver or hear.

(2) Why did God let my baby die? The answer is ultimately because of sin in this world that we live in and Satan who has substantial power in causing harm, but the other side of this is the truth that God loves your baby so much that he made sure that death would not be the end, and you can live for eternity with your child.

A David prayed, 2 Samuel 12:22-23, "And he said, "While the child was *still* alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows, the LORD may be gracious to me, that the child may live. But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.'"

B Revelation 21:4 "He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be *any* death; there shall no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."