

# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

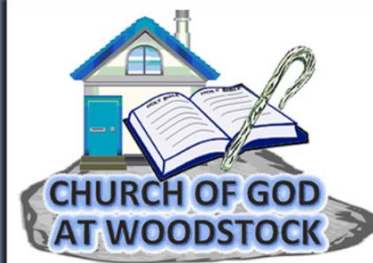


**TRUTH ON THE  
WEB MINISTRIES**

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EPH 6:17 AND TAKE...THE SWORD OF THE  
SPIRIT WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD

A CHURCH OF GOD IN WOODSTOCK, ILLINOIS



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Who is God?

- The Supreme Being; the Creator and Ruler of all that is; the Self-existent One who is perfect in power, goodness, and wisdom.”
- Has one Son [*Jesus*], by whom we are able to have a relationship with Him.
- Some of His attributes are all powerful, all knowing, all present, all loving.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

All Powerful (omnipotent)

Daniel 4:35

And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and **he doeth according to his will** in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and **none can stay his hand**, or say unto him, What doest thou?

Matthew 10:29

Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And **not one of them** falls to the ground **apart from your Father's will**.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

All Powerful (omnipotent)

Isaiah 14:27

For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and **who shall disannul it?** and his hand is stretched out, and **who shall turn it back?**

Job 42:1–2a

Then Job answered the LORD, and said, I know that **thou canst do every thing...**





# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## All Powerful (omnipotent)

Is there anything God can't do? **Yes.**

- God can't lie
- God can't be unrighteous
- God can't be over-powered
- God can't be a fool
- God can't contradict Himself
- God can't do things that are not logically possible, such as:
  - Make a square-circle
  - Make a rock so heavy that He can't lift it
  - Make everyone turn to Him in Faith (free will a little later)



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

All Knowing (omniscient)

Job 42:2b

...and that **no thought can be withholden from thee.**

Isaiah 46:10

**Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done,** saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

All Knowing (omniscient)

Hebrews 4:12-13

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is **a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart**. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but **all things are naked and open to the eyes** of Him to whom we must give account.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Everywhere at once (omnipresent)

Proverbs 15:3

The eyes of the LORD **are in every place**, beholding the evil and the good.

Jeremiah 23:24

Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. **Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.**

Acts 17:27

That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, **though he be not far from every one of us:**





# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Everywhere at once (omnipresent)

## Psalms 139:7–12

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, **thou art there**: if I make my bed in hell, behold, **thou art there**. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; **Even there** shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; **even the night** shall be light about me. Yea, **the darkness hideth not from thee**; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Perfectly loving and good (omnibenevolent)

1 John 4:16

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. **God is love**; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Romans 2:4

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the **goodness of God** leadeth thee to repentance?



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Perfectly loving and good (omnibenevolent)

John 3:16

For God **so loved the world**, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Romans 5:8

But God commendeth **his love toward us**, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## What is evil?

Evil is usually thought of as that which is morally wrong, sinful, or wicked; however, the word evil can also refer to anything that causes harm, with or without the moral dimension.

### Privation

: the state of being deprived

### Examples:

- Dark is the privation of light
- Cold is the privation of heat

And some (T. Aquinas, etc.) would state that:

- Evil is the privation of Good





# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## What is evil?

### Moral evil

- Evil committed or caused by immoral acts.
- These can only be committed by mankind and other moral beings (Satan, demons, etc.).
- Animals and other creatures cannot commit moral evil, although they might commit natural evil.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## What is evil?

### Moral evil

- Disobedience to a standard.
- Requires there is someone that can set the standard.
- Biblically God sets the moral standard and disobedience to it is known as sin, transgression, etc.

As a side note: the fact that there is a universal standard (revealed by our conscience) is strong evidence for the existence of God and His moral standard.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## What is evil?

### Natural evil

- Earthquakes, severe weather, floods, plagues, forest fires, meteor impacts, animal attacks, auto accidents, falls, birth defects, etc.
- Evil that can't (seemingly) be ascribed to the moral evil of humans.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

God hates evil & suffering

Psalms 5:4–5

For thou art **not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness**: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou **hatest all workers of iniquity**.

Isaiah 5:20

Woe unto them that **call evil good, and good evil**; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!





# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

God hates evil & suffering

Romans 12:9

Let love be without dissimulation. **Abhor that which is evil**; cleave to that which is good.

Revelation 21:4

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**.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Have you ever been asked, or heard someone ask:

- How could I follow a God that would allow such evil to happen?
- How can *you* follow such a God?
- Why doesn't God stop all the evil, pain and suffering that happens everyday?
- Isn't all the evil in the world proof that God doesn't exist? [at least a loving God]

Or maybe you have struggled with some of these questions within yourself.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## The Problem of Evil

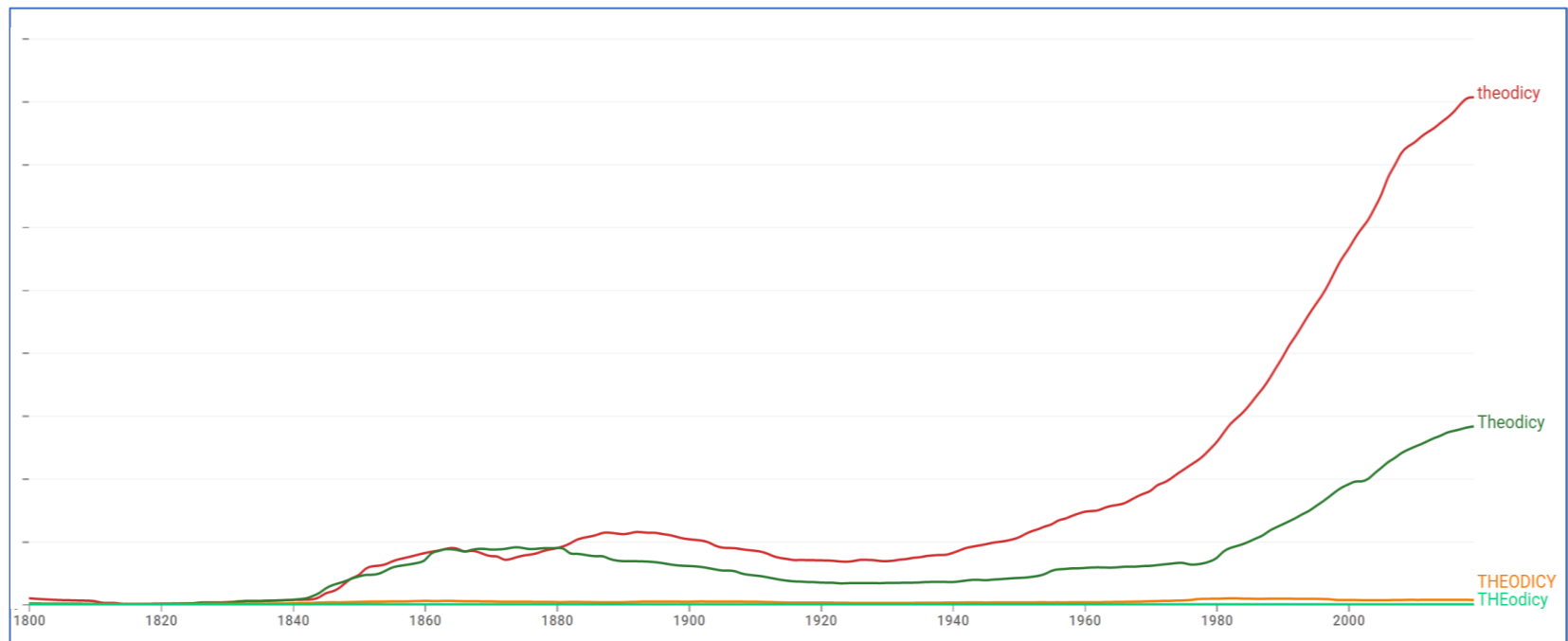
- Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able?
  - *Then He is not omnipotent.*
- Is He able but not willing?
  - *Then He is malevolent.*
- Is He both able and willing?
  - *Then why is there evil?*
- Is He neither able nor willing?
  - *Then why call Him God?*



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Theodicy

:explains why an omnipotent, all good God allows evil



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Theodicy

:explains why an omnipotent, all good God allows evil

A true theodicy provides one or more *SPECIFIC* reasons for evil.





# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Theodicy – examples for clarification

- Joe orders a book and is notified that it's delivered.
- Upon arriving home, it isn't there.
- Joe assumes that it **MUST** have been stolen and rants to his neighbor Bob, who happens to be standing nearby.
- Bob tells Joe he saw Sally (Joe's wife) take the package inside – thus, not stolen.

This example provides a *SPECIFIC* reason.

The reason reveals that it isn't an evil after all.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Another approach (not a Theodicy)

Instead of attempting to provide the actual reason God allows evil (since we don't certainly know it), we can provide a DEFENSE.

This defense will show it is possible that God is exactly who we have previously described and yet still allows evil.

For those who do NOT want to believe, it will be unconvincing.

To those who are lost, searching for The Blessed Hope, this can be a Godsend.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Defense – example for clarification

- Same scenario, except the neighbor didn't see Sally take the package in.
- Bob is concerned Joe's rage will lead to no good.
- Instead of giving Joe a specific reason (because Bob doesn't know), he provides possible reasons.
- Some possible reasons:
  - Sally took the package in.
  - Another neighbor took it for safe keeping.
  - The package is late and will be delivered tomorrow.
  - The author of the book is signing it and will return it later.
  - The book has temporarily shifted into a different dimension but will soon shift back (permanently).



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Defense – example for clarification

This example provides *POSSIBLE* reasons.

Since neither Bob or Joe know the actual reason, it cannot be known for sure what happened to the package.

This example doesn't provide a specific reason, but it provides enough to show that Joe's assumption that the book **MUST** have been stolen is not reasonable. There are many possible scenarios that can explain the evil.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Morally sufficient  
reason for evil





# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

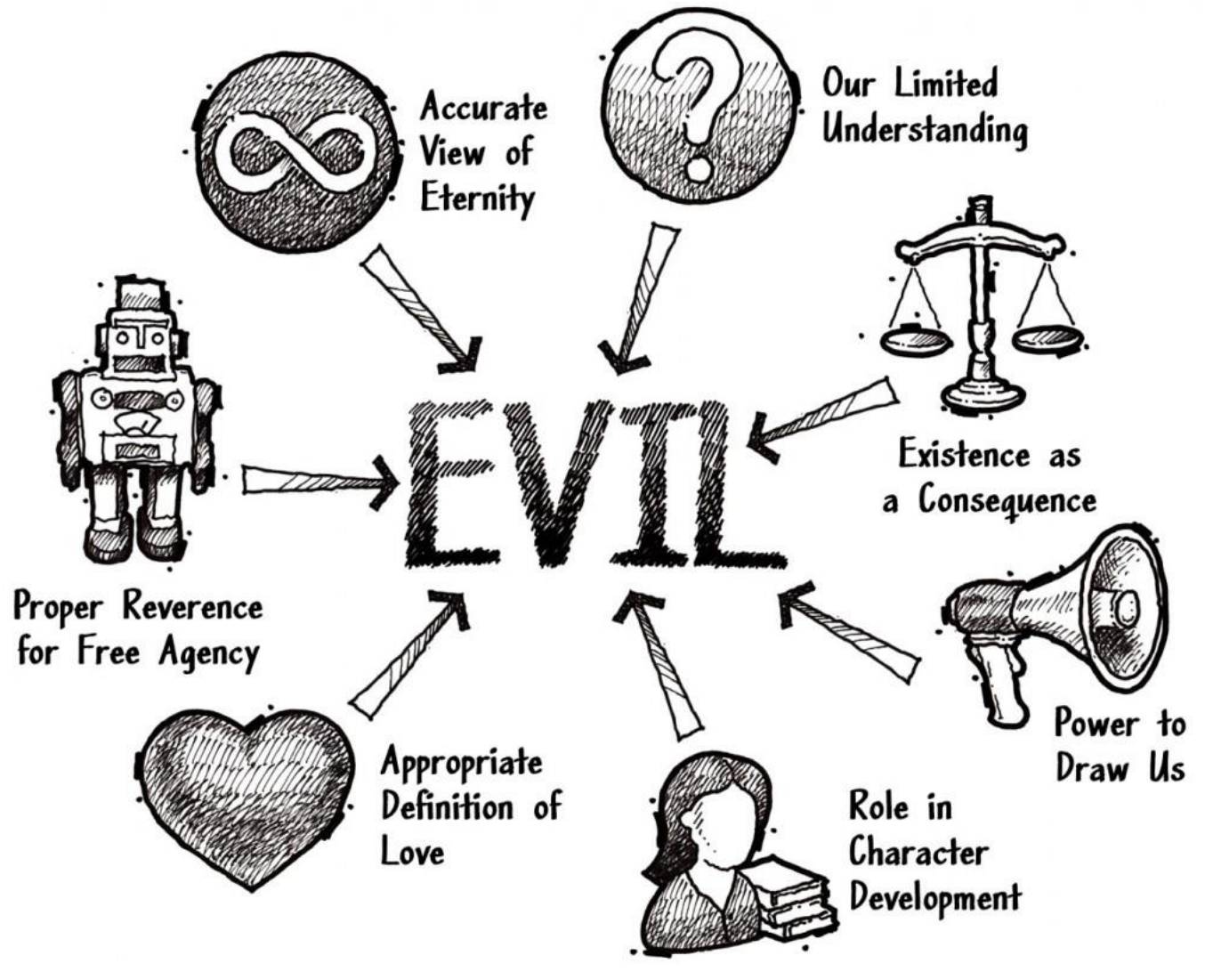
You walk into a room where a person is laying facedown unconscious on a table. Standing over him is another man with a sharp knife in his hand, about to cut the unconscious man open.

If the man with the knife is a surgeon, then all good, if he is an enemy, not good!

Being cut open is never a good thing, but there are circumstances where this 'evil' act might be justified. This would be a **morally sufficient reason for the evil.**



# THE PROBLEM OF **EVIL**



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Accurate view of Eternity

There is hope of eternity beyond what may seem to be a vale of tears this life offers.

Eternity, in comparison to a short time of suffering is a pretty good deal. Knowing there is a reward doesn't stop grief from being grief, but it makes the load lighter and the destination sure.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Accurate view of Eternity

### Isaiah 25:8

He will **swallow up death in victory**; and the Lord GOD will **wipe away tears** from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people **shall he take away** from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

### Revelation 22:3

And there shall be **no more curse**: but the **throne of God** and of the **Lamb shall be in it**; and his servants **shall serve him**:



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Evil as a Consequence

Sometimes our suffering is as a result of our own actions.

We suffer sore joints because we took poor care of ourselves when we were young.

We suffer financial difficulty because we were lustful with our spending, running up credit card debt, etc.





# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Evil as a Consequence

Job 4:8

Even as I have seen, **they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.**

Proverbs 22:8

He that soweth iniquity **shall reap vanity**: and the rod of his anger **shall fail**.

Galatians 6:8

For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh **reap corruption**; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit **reap life everlasting**.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Power to Draw

Most people don't think twice when things are going well. The 'good life' fills our focus, and we have little time or need (seemingly) to stop and wonder just why the roses do smell so sweet.

But let a little tragedy, a little suffering enter, and it may prompt someone, maybe for the first time, to consider the bigger questions about life and its purpose.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Power to Draw

### Ecclesiastes 7:2–3

It is better to go to the **house of mourning**, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and **the living will lay it to his heart.**

**Sorrow is better than laughter:** for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Power to Draw

### Judges 3:7–9

And the children of Israel **did evil in the sight of the LORD**, and forgot the LORD their God, and served Baalim and the groves. Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and **he sold them** into the hand of Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushanrishathaim eight years. And **when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD**, the LORD **raised up a deliverer** to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Character Development

No pain, no gain.

Difficulties in life (self-imposed or otherwise) provide opportunity to learn and grow.

Just as the butterfly must struggle out of the chrysalis to be able to fly, difficult times provide similar opportunities for us.





# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Character Development

### Hebrews 12:6–7

For **whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth**, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, **God dealeth with you as with sons**; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

### Hebrews 12:12–13

Wherefore **lift up the hands** which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; **but let it rather be healed**.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Definition of Love

Apart from the influence of God's prevailing spirit, most of us revert to the base idea of love – if it makes me happy, it is love – if not, then not love.

Our definition of love has been deeply compromised by the way it is portrayed in contemporary novels and movies.

Love is far more than sentimentality, romance, or affection.

Loving parents may allow a dentist to inflict temporary pain on their child for longterm good.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Definition of Love

### 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.

### Matthew 22:37–39

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt **love the Lord thy God** with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt **love thy neighbour** as thyself.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Morally significant free will

Real love requires the ability to not love. Even the sin-twisted world we live in knows that you can't force someone to love you.

Rational thought and action require freedom to be able to choose (and not always what is right).

A world without the ability to act freely would seemingly be one populated by robots.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Morally significant free will

Genesis 2:16–17

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, **thou shalt not eat of it**: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Revelation 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man **hear my voice, and open the door**, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Morally significant free will

Deuteronomy 30:19

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that **I have set before you life and death**, blessing and cursing: therefore **choose life**, that both thou and thy seed may live:

Galatians 5:13

For, brethren, ye have been called **unto liberty**; only **use not liberty for an occasion** to the flesh, but by love serve one another.





# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Limited Understanding

A child is not able to understand many of the reasons for the 'evil' their parents perpetrate on them, almost daily it seems.

A soldier understands only a small part of the battle plan.

We don't know what God's plan is – what minute purposes He is working out through our suffering, but we can know, since He is who He is, that it is always just, for good, for the best.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Limited Understanding

### Isaiah 55:8–9

For **my thoughts** are not your thoughts, neither are your ways **my ways**, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are **higher** than the earth, so are **my ways higher** than your ways, and **my thoughts** than your thoughts.

### Genesis 50:20

But as for you, **ye thought evil** against me; **but God meant it unto good**, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Limited Understanding

Why suppose that if God does have a good reason for permitting evil, the theist would be the first to know? Perhaps God has a good reason, but that reason is too complicated for us to understand. Or perhaps He has not revealed it for some other reason.

The theist believes that God has a reason for permitting evil; he doesn't know what that reason is. But why should that mean that his belief is improper or irrational?

Plantinga, Alvin. God, Freedom, and Evil



# THE PROBLEM OF **EVIL**

## Natural evil



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Natural evil?

Evil that can't (seemingly) be ascribed to the free will actions of humans.

On the one hand, it is conceivable that some natural evils and some persons are so related that the persons would have produced less moral good if the evils had been absent. Some people deal creatively with certain kinds of hardship or suffering, acting in such a way that on balance the whole state of affairs is valuable.

Plantinga, Alvin. God, Freedom, and Evil



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Natural evil?

A more traditional line of thought is indicated by St. Augustine, who attributes much of the natural evil we find to Satan or to Satan and his cohorts (outside that which is as a result of God's punishment).

Plantinga, Alvin. God, Freedom, and Evil





# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Theodicy vs Defense refresher

Augustine is presenting a **THEODICY**, as opposed to a **DEFENSE**. He believes that *in fact* natural evil (except for what can be attributed to God's punishment) is to be ascribed to the activity of beings that are free and rational but nonhuman. The Defense, of course, **does not assert that this is *fact***; he says only that it is possible. He points to the possibility that natural evil is due to the actions of significantly free but nonhuman persons.

Plantinga, Alvin. God, Freedom, and Evil



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Why a DEFENSE and not a Theodicy?

Some theodicies and defenses limit God – making Him less than what Scripture reveals He is.

In an attempt to provide a specific reason why evil exists, some aspect of God or His creation must be altered to match.

This desire to know exactly why God does what He does has led to untold numbers of false doctrines and divisions within His body – many turning into full heresy.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## Some other objections

God should let us know what His purpose is. Why doesn't He tell us?

He has in sufficient detail (covered in previous slides and other places) – but many do not want to listen.

God should just get rid of evil!

If God got rid evil, He would have to wipe you (and me) out also.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

When the agnostic or atheist reject God on the basis of evil, this leaves them in a pitiful spot. They have no hope in this evil filled life. Their rejection of God doesn't make the evil and suffering go away. They simply must accede that evil happens, too bad, so sad. Eat, drink and suffer, for tomorrow they die.

In many cases the rejection of God, because He doesn't stop evil, is based in some traumatic event(s) in the past, they are left with just more trauma of a hopeless future.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

The Christian on the other hand, has a reasoned, faithful approach that provides real hope and an understanding that there is purpose in evil, suffering and loss – even if we don't know specifically what it is.

This is the very hope those who have never had or have lost their faith need!

And it is one of the reasons it is so important for those who have this HOPE to actively share it in a world that increasingly needs it.





# THE PROBLEM OF **EVIL**



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## What we do know

### Hebrews 2:9–10 (NLT)

What we do see is Jesus, who for a little while was given a position “a little **lower than the angels**”; and **because he suffered death** for us, he is now “**crowned with glory and honor.**” Yes, by God’s grace, **Jesus tasted death for everyone.** God, for whom and through whom everything was made, **chose to bring many children into glory.** And it was only right **that he should make Jesus**, through his suffering, a perfect leader, fit to bring them into their salvation.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## What we do know

### 1 Timothy 2:4

**Who will have all men to be saved**, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

### 2 Peter 3:9

**The Lord is not slack** concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but **is longsuffering** to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Why does it matter?

1 Peter 3:15

But **sanctify the Lord God in your hearts**: and be **ready always to give an answer** to every man that asketh you a **reason of the hope** that is in you with meekness and fear:

Matthew 18:12

How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, **doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?**





# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Why does it matter?

2 Timothy 2:23-26 (NLT)

Again I say, **don't get involved** in foolish, ignorant arguments that only start fights. A servant of the Lord must **not quarrel but must be kind to everyone**, be **able to teach**, and **be patient with difficult people**. Gently instruct those who oppose the truth.

**Perhaps God will change those people's hearts**, and they will learn the truth. Then they will come to their senses and **escape from the devil's trap**. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants.



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## 1 Thessalonians 5:16–21

Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. **Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.**



# THE PROBLEM OF **EVIL**

Q & A



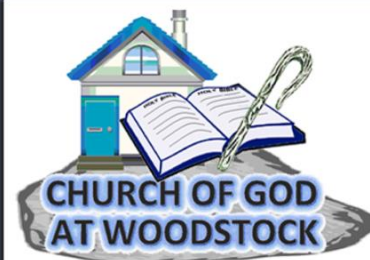


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**CHURCH OF GOD  
AT WOODSTOCK**

# THE PROBLEM OF

## ENJOY THE REST OF THE SABBATH

# EVIL