

THE DECLARED REASON FOR EVIL AND SUFFERING—THE FALL OF MAN

INTRO

Last week we began to look at a question that is often asked in the aftermath of such things as bombings, earthquakes, fires, floods, hurricanes, and shootings. The question is this: “Why Does a good, All-Powerful and All-Knowing God, allow evil and suffering in the world?”

It is a relevant question because at some point or another, evil and suffering will move from across the world—or across the street—to right under our roof and into **our** hearts! It will affect us; we ourselves will be asking: “God, if you love me, why are you letting this happen to me?”

It is also relevant because the atheist believes it is proof-positive that God does not exist. After the Asian tsunami in December 2004 took the lives of over a quarter million people, Barbara Ehrenreich wrote an article titled “God Owes Us an Apology.” Here is some of what she said:

“If we are responsible for our actions, as most religions insist, then God should be, too, and I would propose, post-tsunami, an immediate withdrawal of prayer and other forms of flattery directed at a supposedly moral deity—at least until an apology is issued....If God cares about our puny species, then disasters prove that he is not all-powerful; and if he is all-powerful, then clearly he doesn’t give a _____ (Alcorn, 84).

So how do we answer the question when it creeps into our own thinking—or when we are asked by the mocker? Are natural disasters—or people killing people—**really** proof that God doesn’t exist? Not at all! In fact, I would argue that from the Bible we can give **reasons** why there is evil and suffering in the world whereas the atheist and evolutionist cannot. For example, where is the proof that mankind in general is “evolving” into a better and better person? There is none because it is not happening!

This morning I want to begin to consider **reasons** for evil and suffering. Reason #1 is the **Declared** Reason for Evil and Suffering—**the Fall of Man**.

Why is there suffering in the world? Why is there earthquakes and floods and hurricanes and tornadoes?
1. Because the Habitation of Man is Cursed (Romans 8:19-22)

“**Cursed** is the ground for thy sake;”—because of you—“**in sorrow** shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life” (Gen 3:17). **Turn to** Romans 8:19.

Verse 19—“For the earnest expectation of the *creature* waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.”

“Creature” in verse 19, 20, and 21 refers to **creation** because that is what makes sense according to the context—and is what it says in verse 22.

The “manifestation of the sons of God” refers to the time when God’s children will be glorified; when we will have a body like that of Christ and will be sin-free. I John 3:2 “Beloved, NOW are we the sons of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

A. The earth is cursed

--We read it in Genesis; we also see it here.

--Verse 20—creation “was made subject to vanity.” John Phillips suggests *vanity* means “disappointing misery” and “not measuring up to that which it was intended.”

God did not create the earth to be cursed, but cursed it as part of the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin in the garden of Eden.

--Verse 21 says creation "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption"

B. The earth wants to get out from under the curse.

--Verse 19 "For the earnest expectation"—the longing desire of the earth—is for God's people to be glorified so it can get out from under the curse

-- Verse 22 "creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." This "groaning and travailing in pain" carries the idea of suffering the pains of childbirth. The predominant desire in childbirth is for it to be over with. That is the feeling of creation—it wants to be done with the curse—it wants the consequences of the curse to be over.

C. The earth will get out from under the curse.

--Notice again verse 21: "Because the creature [creation] itself SHALL be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Revelation 21:1 "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away...." There is a future day when the earth will be free from the curse.

So...what does the earth being cursed have to do with evil and suffering in the world? Think with me what God said prior to driving Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden: "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and **live for ever**..." (Gen 3:22). God's original design was that man live forever.

Although God knew mankind would sin and had the plan in place to save man from the punishment of his sin even before He created the world, His desire was that man NOT sin. With man's sin came the consequences of sin—a **curse** on creation and **death** to all mankind. Romans 5:12 says "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."

Cancer, disease, and death came into the world because of man's sin—not God's design.

Earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes were a consequence of man's sin—not God's design.

Ken Ham from AiG writes: "But instead of us saying, 'Look what *our* sin did to the world!'" we say, "'Why does *God* do that?'" ("How Could a Loving God...?;" pg 69)

That accounts for natural disasters, but what about the evil happenings in the world like bombings and shootings and wars? Why do we have those?

2. Because the Heart of Man is Corrupt (Romans 3:9-18)

A. Declaration of the sinfulness of man (9)

Paul begins the chapter by asking if there is an advantage in being a Jew. As a Jew himself, Paul then asks whether Jews—the descendants of Abraham and God's chosen people of the OT—are better off than everyone else. "No" is his response. "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles"—in other words everyone—"that they are all under sin." No one is exempt; everyone has the presence of sin and is controlled by the power of sin and faces the penalty of sin—unless we are rescued from it!

B. Demonstration of the sinfulness of man (10-18)

After making the declaration that all of mankind is sinful, Paul proves it by quoting a number of OT passages to demonstrate that **everyone** is sinful.

i. **Demonstrated by its width**—how widespread it is. **No one** is excluded (10-12)

--V 10: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

--V 11: "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

--V 12: "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

ii. **Demonstrated by wicked words** (13-14)

--V 13: "Their throat is an open sepulcher" Instead of speaking the words of life and healing; they speak of death and promote death

--V 13: "With their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips" They lie to others and destroy others with their poisonous, hateful words

--V 14: "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness" (See also James 3:8-10).

iii. **Demonstrated by wicked works** (15-18)

--V 15: "Feet are swift to shed blood"—there are cold-blooded killers that we hear about almost daily; and there are hard-hearted doctors who daily shed the blood of the innocent

--V 16: "Destruction and misery are in their ways"—they "sow" destruction and misery—that is what they delight in—and they will "reap" it as well

--V 17: "And the way of peace have they not known"—they don't know peace—and they don't want peace

--V 18: "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

That sums it up: With no fear of God before their eyes—with no belief in future consequences—they act on the evilness of their own heart.

Let's pause here for a moment. I'm not a mind reader, but some of you are thinking "Wait a minute, Pastor, you said **everyone** is a sinner, then proceeded to prove it by pointing out the wicked words and wicked ways of sinners. The problem is, I don't **do** those things. I haven't killed anyone—and don't plan on it—and I don't say hateful things to people or about people. I try to help people—not destroy them—and my mouth most certainly isn't full of cursing."

My response? First off, remember that **I** didn't come up with the list—God did. Jeremiah 17:9 says "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" **None of us** know the depths of the wickedness of our heart—but God does. Are there people that have done the things that are listed here? There most certainly are. Watch the evening news and you will see examples of these things every day.

Second, just because you **haven't** done these things doesn't mean you aren't **capable** of doing them. I remember Dr. Bob Jones III at a Men for Christ rally saying something to the effect that "Any Christian is capable of committing any sin if under the right circumstance and provocation." In other words, just because we haven't committed a particular sin does not mean it is impossible for us to commit that sin. Instead of being proud that we don't stoop to certain sins, we should be praising God for His grace and protection. "But for the grace of God, there goes me" is a good attitude to have and live by.

Lastly, don't be so quick to say you haven't done many of these things. Let's think about **lying** for a minute. Verse 13 says "with their tongues they have used deceit." There is not a one of us in this room—with the exception of maybe an infant—who hasn't told a lie.

One more; look at verse 18—"There is no fear of God before their eyes." Can we really say we fear God if we make a conscious decision to put **our** desires and will above God's? And do we really fear God when we view our opinions about how to get to heaven as more trustworthy **than what God says** about how to get in?

So, what does the heart of man being corrupt have to do with evil and suffering in the world? Easy, one-word answer—EVERYTHING! Because the heart of man is corrupt, there will always be evil; there will always be:

- abuse and addictions
- beatings and bombings
- death and destruction
- hate and hurt
- rape and robbery
- shootings and stabbings
- wars and rumors of wars

Considering the corruptness of the heart of man, we shouldn't be surprised by evil—we should be surprised that there isn't more evil than there is! Why is there evil and suffering in the world? Because of sin; because of the fall of man. The habitation of man—the earth—is cursed and the heart of man is corrupt. Kind of discouraging, isn't it? There is good news, though:

3. *The hope of man is Christ!* (Romans 6:22-23)

A. Freedom from the power of sin (22)

"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness"

- "Being made free...." sin does not have to be your master; you can become a servant of God
- The fruit of your life doesn't have to be evil—it can be holiness

B. Freedom from the penalty of sin (23a)

"For the wages of sin"—the penalty—"is death..." Death here is not just the cessation of life—it is eternal separation from God. We all know and love John 3:16, but tend to focus on the everlasting life part of that verse. Let's not forget that that is contrasted with "perishing"—eternal condemnation for not believing on Christ. (See also John 3:36 and Revelation 20:14-15)

We can escape the condemnation of God—we can be free from the penalty of our sin—through Jesus Christ." It is a gift—not something we can earn by working for—and it is in Christ. That is why Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). "But as many as received Him—Christ—to them gave He power—the right—to become the children of God, even to them that believe in His name" (John 1:12).

C. Freedom from the presence of sin (22b, 23b)

Last part of verse 22: "and the end everlasting life;" last part of verse 23: "but the gift of God is eternal life"

Everlasting life—eternal life in heaven with God—will be free from the **presence** of sin. God who is of "purer eyes than to behold and cannot look upon sin" will obviously have a sin-free heaven. We also know from Revelation 21:4 that "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."

Why is there evil and suffering in the world? Because of sin entering into the world with the fall of man. When will it end? It won't—in this life. You are in for a discouraging life of disappointment and heart-ache if you think evil and suffering will end in the world as we know it. So, what are we to do?

1. Expect evil and suffering in **this** life. I didn't say "embrace it," but realize that it will continue until Jesus returns and sets things right. Jesus Himself said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation—trials and troubles—but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).
2. Escape evil and suffering in the **next** life by trusting Christ. He alone can give you freedom from the power of sin and the penalty of sin and the presence of sin.