

X.4. Lambs to Rams: Evil, Pain and Suffering

Is there really a God?

Adapted from: Does HUMAN SUFFERING Disprove The
Existence of a Benevolent God?

By Wayne Jackson

Rev 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for **Thou hast created all things**, and **for Thy pleasure** they are and were created. (*Emp. added*)

God's purpose in creating mankind is that of the same desire He put into fathers who also yearn for offspring to carry on their lineage.

Mal 2:15 ...That he might seek a godly seed (*Heb.2233-seed; figuratively fruit, posterity*)...

Questioning God

Jdg 6:11 And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which *was* in Ophrah, that *pertained* unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide *it* from the Midianites. 12 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD *is* with thee, thou mighty man of valor. 13 And Gideon said unto Him, Oh my Lord, **if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us?** And where *be* all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? But now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. (*Emp. added*)

Just as Gideon once inquired about the cause of the suffering they were going through at the hands of Midian, so countless times through the ages others have questioned "why me?" in their search for answers concerning the existence of God. "Why did God take my child?" "Why did He take my mother through

breast cancer?” “Why did my friend die in a car accident”? “Where was God when I pleaded with Him to resolve these and other issues?” “Is He really there?”

The Problem Stated

“With many people, the great obstacle to belief in God is the problem of evil and suffering. Because men cannot subject **all** suffering to meaningful analysis, the assumption sometimes is made that there cannot exist a loving God such as the Bible indicates.” (*Emp. added*)

Wayne Jackson

In other words, there are times when there are no explanations for suffering and many people take that as proof that there is no God.

“If God wishes to prevent evil, but cannot, then He is not all-powerful; if He can prevent evil, but will not, then He is not good; if He has both the power and will to eliminate evil, then why is evil present in the world?”

Greek philosopher Epicurus (342-270 B.C.)

Act 17:18 Then certain **philosophers** (*Gk.5386- fond of wise things*) of the Epicureans and of the Stoics encountered him (*Paul*). (*Emp. added*) (*See also 1 Cor 1:25.*)

Col 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy (*Gk.5385- Jewish sophistry*) and vain (*Gk.2756- empty*) deceit (*Gk.539- delusion*), after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Jas 3:15 This wisdom (*Gk.4678- [lower, worldly]*) descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. 16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. 17 But the wisdom (*Gk.4678- higher, spiritual*) that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated (*Gk.2138- good for persuasion*), full of mercy and good

fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

“The fallacy of the argument, of course, is the **assumption** that no good purpose can be served by the allowance of evil and suffering in the world. ...when a person raises the question of ‘evil’, he inadvertently is appealing to some **universal system of justice** that evil violates. But if there is no God, hence no universal system of ‘rightness’, how could there be any such thing as ‘evil’?” (*Emp. added*)

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Rom 11:33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments, and His ways past finding out!

We cannot know or understand why God allows certain evils to exist but we can trust in His providence to do what is right.

Gen 18:25 That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee: **Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?** (*Emp. added*)

Sometimes the righteous suffer right along with the wicked through no fault of their own.

Heb 13:5 ...for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

God also suffered when He ransomed His Son.

1Jn 4:9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation (*Gk.2434- atonement*) for our sins.

God allowed His Son to suffer in our stead even though He committed no lawlessness. It was His choice to suffer for the creation in order to save us from having to suffer eternally.

Heb 2:9 But we see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels **for the suffering of death**, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. (*Emp. added*)

Choice

God's love for man is evident in the fact that He created man with free agency, i.e., He gave man the choice to obey or rebel. As a loving parent does not force his love on his children and gives their child the same choices, so God is with His creation, "for we are also His offspring" (*Act 17:28*).

Gen 2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17 But (*choice*) 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.

Jos 24:15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, **choose** you this day whom ye will serve; **whether** the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood (*here speaking of the Jordan River*), **or** the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: **but** as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. (*Emp. added*)

Isa 7:15 Butter and honey shall He (*Immanuel*) eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and **choose** the good. (*Emp. added*) (*Even Jesus was subjected to choice because He chose to become one of us.*)

"Could anyone conceive of God as a **loving** God Who created intelligent beings, but then programmed them to slavishly serve Him **without personal willpower**? Hardly! Accordingly, the facts thus suggested are these: (1) God is love. (2) But love allows freedom of choice. (3) Thus, God allows freedom of choice. Further, where freedom of choice is permitted, there is certainly the possibility that **finite** creatures will make wrong

choices”; which “must entail some adverse consequences.”
(Emp. added) Wayne Jackson

Consequences of Choices: National Choice

Jdg 6:1 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.

This answers Gideon’s question “if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us?” Their suffering was the result of their disobedience, as a nation, toward God. He didn’t forsake them, they forsook Him! The same still goes for modern nations that reject Him as Lord and Master. Individuals suffer when governments make poor choices that go against the will of God; making homosexual marriages legal while punishing faith based businesses for not complying, legalizing abortion, promoting Islam and other false religions, etc.

Personal Choice

1Pe 4:15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

Speaking to Christians, Peter warns them of the consequences they too would suffer if they were to commit lawlessness.

1Pe 4:3 For the time past of *our* life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: 4 Wherein they think it strange that ye **run not with them** to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of *you*: 5 Who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. *(Emp. added)*

1Pe 4:16 Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. 17 For the

time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it first begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of **them that obey not the Gospel of God?** 18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved*, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? 19 Wherefore let **them that suffer according to the will of God** commit the keeping of their souls *to Him* in well doing, **as unto a faithful Creator.** (*Emp. added*)

**Mat 7:14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

“If a man steals and goes to prison, is it not his fault? If a man murders and is executed, shall God be blamed? Yet someone may argue: God could have prevented the crime, hence the suffering. **Not if He wanted to preserve man’s freedom of choice!** God limits His own activity by lovingly granting man free willpower.” (*Emp. added*) Wayne Jackson

Choices of Others

“A considerable amount of suffering is caused by the bad choices of our fellows. We cannot argue that **we** must be allowed freedom of choice, and yet it should be denied everyone else.” Wayne Jackson

Rom 2:11 For there is no respect of persons with God.

Who would make the choice of who gets to have free will and who does not?

Choices of Past Generations

“Much of the world’s suffering is the result of the freedom of choice that was abused by generations of the ancient past. If we reap the benefits of the labors of former generations (e.g., scientific discoveries), can we avoid reaping the evils as well?” *[Job 2:10]* Wayne Jackson

Exo 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them (*graven images- v.4*), nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of **them that hate Me** (*chose to hate Me*); 6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments. (*Emp. added*)

Pro 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

One generation states that they won't make the same mistakes their parents made but end up just repeating them, only in a different time, place and/or manner.

Ecc 1:9 The thing that hath been, it *is that* which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and *there is no new thing under the sun.* (*Emp. added*)

Rom 5:12 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:

Adam's choice to not obey God resulted in physical death to all of mankind. Even the innocent suffer because of the choices of others. Our righteous choices as Christians (*speaking to those who are*) will **not** separate us from God's love even though we still might have to go through some suffering, especially because of the mistakes of others.

Rom 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature,

shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jas 4:14 Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

Weather Related

“Many scholars believe that the universal Flood of Noah’s day (Gen 6-8) left behind the conditions that facilitate the occurrence of storms, earthquakes, etc.. But what was responsible for that universal deluge? Human wickedness was the cause (Gen 6:5-7). Had it not been for man’s evil, the Flood would not have come, the features of the earth would not have been so altered, and man would not be suffering the results thereof today.”

Wayne Jackson

Until the flood, weather conditions were different as if the earth was in a greenhouse.

Gen 2:6 But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

Gen 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. 6 And it repented the LORD (*He changed His way of dealing with man’s sin.**) that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. 7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth Me that I have made them.

*Num 23:19 God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?

*1Sa 15:29 And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for He is not a man, that He should repent.

Natural Law

"Suppose a plane crashes and scores of people were killed; shall we blame God because some engineer, mechanic, navigator, or pilot overlooked or ignored an aeronautical principal, or perhaps a weather factor was not considered properly?" "What sort of world would this be if God intervened, **suspending His natural laws**, each time one of His creatures encountered a life threatening situation?" (*Emp. added*)

Wayne Jackson

Luk 13:4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Jesus used this illustration of a tower collapsing on eighteen persons (*showing the natural law of gravity*) noting that they were no more sinners than their sinful peers. He went on to state His case on the subject of repentance being necessary to salvation for all mankind **before** it would be too late.

Benefits of Suffering

Everyone on earth will suffer at one point in time or another because of the ultimate consequence of sin (*Gen 3*). Whether because of consequences from our own choices, the choices of others or some natural law, we will all suffer to some degree sometime. The true test is in how we handle it and what condition we are in with respect to God. He wants a relationship with His creation and desires "that all should come to repentance" (*2 Pet 3:9*). But if we get too comfortable in this life we might not "desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly" (*Heb 11:16*).

"Suffering and evil serve to remind us that this Earth never was designed to be man's permanent abode." "The Lord has

prepared a better home for those who serve Him, and suffering helps us be 'homesick'."

Wayne Jackson

Job 3:17 There (*in Heaven*) the wicked cease *from* troubling; and there the weary be at rest.

Rom 8:28 And we know that **all things work together for good to them that love God**, to them who are the called (2 *The 2:14*) according to *His* purpose. (*Emp. added*)

All good and evil, in the end, will benefit the faithful Christian who suffered and yet remained loyal to his God.

1Pe 1:5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith (*the Gospel- Rom 1:16*) unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, **though now for a season**, if need be, **ye are in heaviness** through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: (*Emp. added*)

Jas 1:12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.

Becoming a Christian doesn't take suffering away; it does make it easier to bear, knowing of the home that awaits the faithful in the end!

X.4. Questions

1. Why do so many people not believe in God? a) because they were never taught to; b) because of the hypocrites they have come in contact with; c) because of evil, pain and suffering.
2. True or false: God is not partial when He allows suffering to occur by other's mistakes. a) true; b) false; c) the text does not say.
3. As noted in this study, what serves as proof that God loves man as His creation? a) He gave Jesus to die for man's sins; b) He breathed into man the breath of life; c) He gave man free agency.
4. What did Adam's disobedience bring about? a) death; b) the sacrificial system; c) the need for redemption.
5. What can separate us from the love of God? a) death; b) nothing; c) sin.
6. Concerning time, what is a "vapor"? a) a mist; b) a short period of time; c) a cloud that vanishes.
7. What brought about the flood of Noah's day? a) man's wickedness; b) Adam's sin; c) Noah.
8. Ultimately, why must we suffer from evil and pain? a) it gives us the sense of knowing we are human; b) it makes us homesick for Heaven; c) it helps us understand we have feelings.