

Biblical View on the Existence of Evil

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Abstract

The existence of evil in the world poses a significant challenge to the biblical concept of an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good God. The Bible teaches that God is sovereign over all creation, yet evil and suffering persist. This paradox raises questions about the nature of God, the origin of evil, and the purpose of human suffering. The aim of this research is to explore and understand the biblical views on the existence of evil, and to examine the theological implications of this problem for our understanding of God and the world. This study used qualitative research design, using a combination of biblical exegesis, theological analysis, and historical contextualization to explore biblical views on the existence of evil. The primary data source is the biblical texts. Secondary data include commentaries, interpretations, and theological works from various Christian traditions and historical periods. It was recommended that interdisciplinary approaches, combining biblical studies, theology, philosophy, and social sciences, should be employed to provide a comprehensive understanding of evil. It was also recommended that practical applications of biblical teachings on evil should be developed to inform pastoral care, counseling, and social justice initiatives. Finally, it was recommended that educational programmes should be established to teach biblical views on evil, equipping individuals to address evil in their personal and professional life.

Introduction

Man was created in the image of God and was placed above all other creatures. Man sinned and lost his place with God. After the death of the first man 'Adam', his generations began to multiply and began to inherit the deeds of the first man. Many instances were made in the Bible where evil deeds of men abound. Instance one: Cain killed Abel and was cursed by God and he is being remembered for that up until now "But the Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground! Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother's blood. No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be homeless wanderer on the earth". Cain replied to the Lord, "My punishment is too great for me to bear! You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you have made me a homeless wanderer. Anyone who finds me will kill me! The Lord replied,

“No, for I will give a sevenfold punishment to anyone who kills you”. Then the Lord put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him. (Genesis 4: 10-15). Instance two; in the book of Judges, Abimelech killed all the royal sons of his father to enable him to rule. At the end he was killed by a woman (Judges 9:1 to 56).

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die for us. Despite the love of God for man, man still provoked God. God wiped them away from the face of the earth during the time of Noah and allowed Noah and his family to live. God also regretted his action and entered into covenant with Noah that He will not destroy the earth with water. Despite the punishment, man easily forgot and started sinning against God and God sent his only Son Jesus Christ to come and died on the Cross for our sins. Notwithstanding, man still continue in sin even worse than God expected. Do we now blame God for allowing calamities to befall his creatures? Has God not done all He could for human beings?

God is love (John 4:8) the absence of love in a person is un-God-like and therefore evil. And an absence of love manifests itself in unloving behaviour. The same can be said concerning God’s mercy, justice, patience etc. The lack of these godly qualities in anyone constitutes evil. That evil then manifests itself; bringing more harm into the good world that God has made. “As it turns out, we lack a lot; not even one” (Romans 3:10). All the evil that are happening in the world, Nigeria for instance, is God responsible for evil that men do? Do we call God wicked if He refuses to listen to us and allow calamity to befall us? God can allow evil to befall man only when man pushed God to the wall by committing evil.

Definition/Explanation of Evil

Evil is 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. The word is used both ways in the Bible. Anything that contradicts the holy nature of God is evil. (Psalm 51:4). Any disaster, tragedy, or calamity can also be called an ‘evil’. “Then he cried to the Lord, ‘Lord my God, have you brought tragedy even on this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die’” (1Kings 17:20). Evil behaviour includes sin committed against other people (Murder, theft, adultery) and evil committed against God (unbelief, idolatry, blasphemy), from the disobedience in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9) to the wickedness of Babylon the Great (Revelation 18:2), the Bible speaks of the fact of evil, and man is held responsible for the evil he commits; “the one who sins is the one who will die”. (Ezekiel 18:20). The Bible attributes the origin of evil to the rebellion of Satan, a fallen angel, against God (Isaiah 14:12-15), Ezekiel 28:12-19). Satan’s rebellion led to the entrance of sin and evil into the world. The Bible describes evil as a force that opposes God’s will and purposes

(Psalm 51:4, Romans 3:23). Evil is also portrayed as a destructive and corrupting influence that affects humanity and creation (Genesis 6:5, Romans 8:20-22).

The Bible warns that evil has severe consequences, including:

1. Separation from God: Evil leads to spiritual separation from God (Isaiah 59:2, Romans 3:23).
2. Suffering and Pain: Evil causes suffering and pain in the world (Genesis 3:16-19, Romans 8:20-22)
3. Death and destruction: Evil ultimately leads to death and destruction (Romans 6:23, Revelation 20:14-15).

Despite the existence of evil, the Bible assures us that God is sovereign and in control (Psalm 103:19, Isaiah 46:10). God's response to evil includes:

1. Judgement: God judges evil and holds individuals accountable for their actions (Genesis 3:14-19, Revelation 20:11-15).
2. Redemption: God provides redemption and salvation through Jesus Christ, who conquered evil on the cross (John 3:16, Romans 5:8).
3. Restoration: God promises to restore creation and humanity to their original state of goodness and perfection (Romans 8:18-25, Revelation 21:1-4).

The Bible emphasizes human responsibility in the face of evil

1. Choice: Humans have the freedom to choose between good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17, Deuteronomy 30:19).
2. Accountability: Humans are accountable for their actions and will face consequences for their choices (Romans 14:12, Revelation 20:11-15).
3. Resistance: Humans can resist evil and stand against it through faith, prayer, and obedience to God's will (Ephesians 6:10-18, James 4:7).

An Evil Person Defined

An evil person is someone who apathetically desires to see the suffering of other beings.

An evil person is someone who consistently exhibits malevolent behavior, intentions, and character traits, causing harm to others and violating moral and ethical principles.

Biblical example of evil person:

1. King Herod (Matthew 2:16-18): Herod's order to kill all male children in Bethlehem demonstrates his evil character and actions.
2. Another example was by Shakespeare's Richard III: Richard's Machiavellian tactics, manipulation, and murder of innocent people illustrate his evil nature.

Moral Evil

Moral evil is not a physical thing. Moral evil is wrong done to others, and it can exist even when unaccompanied by external action. Murder is an evil action, but it has its start with the moral evil of hatred in the heart (Matthew 5:21-22). Committing adultery is evil, but so is the moral evil of lust in the heart (Matthew 5: 27-28). Jesus said “what comes out of a person is what defiles, them, for it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come-sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person” (Mark 7:20 to 23). Moral evil results from a perpetrator, or one who acts intentionally and in so doing has engaged in some vices. God is not the author of moral evil; rather it is His holiness that defines it. Created in God’s image, we bear the responsibility to make moral choices that please God and conform to His will. He wills our sanctification (1Thessalonians 4:3) and does not wish us to sin (James 1:13). In repentance and faith in Christ, we have forgiveness of sin and a reversal of the moral evil within us (Acts 3:19). As God’s children, we walk according to this command: ‘Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good’ (Romans 12:21). Those who fall into evil behaviour usually start slowly. Paul shows the tragic progression into more and more evil in Romans 1. It starts with refusing to glorify God or give thanks to Him. (Romans 1:21), and it ends with God giving them over to a “depraved mind” and allowing them to be “filled with every kind of wickedness”. (Romans 1:28-29).

Those who practice evil are in Satan’s trap and are slaves to sin. “Opponents of the Lord’s servant must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will” (2Timothy 2:25-26); see also (John 8:34). Only by the grace of God can we be set free.

Physical Evil

Physical evil is the trouble that befalls people in the world, and it may or may not be linked to moral evil or divine judgment. Ecclesiastes 11:2 counsels us to diversify our investments, for this reason; “thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth”. The word evil in this case means “disaster”, “misfortune”, “calamity”, and that is how other translations word it. Sometimes, physical evil is simply the result of an accident or causes unknown, with no known moral cause; examples would include injuries, car wrecks, hurricanes, and earthquakes. Other times, physical evil is God’s retribution for the sins of an individual or group. Sodom and the surrounding cities were destroyed for their sins (Genesis 19), and God “make them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly” (2Peter 2:6). Many times, God warned Israel of the calamities that awaited them if they rebelled: “The Lord

also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words; but will arise against the house of the evil doers and against the help of them that work iniquity”. (Isaiah 31:2). In all cases God works through the situation to bring about His good purpose (Romans 8:28).

Theory of Evil

There are many theories of evil but Privation theory of evil by St Augustine (354-430) will be used because it is more relevant to the research at hand.

Privation Theory

This is St. Augustine’s theory of evil. Augustine’s theory of evil is based on the idea that evil is not a thing or a substance, but rather the privation or absence of good. He argued that evil is not something that exists in itself, but rather it is a corruption or perversion of the good. The key principles of his theory are: A. Evil is not a being. B. Evil is a privation. C. Evil is a result of human free will. D. Evil is not necessary. St. Augustine’s theory implies that God is not the author of evil. That evil is not a part of God’s plan. That Redemption is necessary. Augustine’s theory of evil was criticized for not adequately addressing the problem of natural evil, such as disasters and diseases. Augustine’s theory of evil has also been criticized for not adequately addressing the issue of free will. Some critiques argue that Augustine’s view of free will is too simplistic and does not take into account the complexities of human decision-making. Overall, Augustine’s theory of evil provides a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the nature of evil and its relationship to human free will and God’s sovereignty. While it has been subject to criticism and challenges, it remains an important and influential theory in the history of Christian theology.

A Review of Evil from the Christian Point of View

The bible provides a unique perspective on the existence of evil, offering insights into its origin, nature, and consequences. This review will examine the biblical views on the existence of evil, exploring the various interpretations and perspectives offered by scholars. The bible presents a nuanced view of evil, acknowledging its existence while also emphasizing God’s sovereignty and goodness. In the Old Testament, evil is often associated with human sin and rebellion against God (Genesis 3, Isaiah 59:1-2). The New Testament also emphasizes the role of human sin in the existence of evil, while also highlighting the redemptive work of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:12-21, 1 Corinthians 15:55-57). Evil, in a general context, is the absence or opposite of that which is described as being good. Often evil denotes profound immorality. In certain religious contexts, evil has been described as Supernatural force. Definitions of evil vary, as does the analysis of its motives. Caitlin Matthews, John Matthew Walkers (2004:174) stated “However, elements that are

commonly associated with evil involve unbalanced behaviour involving anger, revenge, fear, hatred psychological trauma, expediency, selfishness, ignorance or neglect”.

Evil according to a Christian world view is any action, thought or attitude that is contrary to the character or will of God. This is shown through the law given in both the Old and New Testament. There is no moral action given in the Bible that is contrary to God’s character or God’s will. Therefore, evil in a Christian world view is contrasted by and in conflict with God’s will. This evil shows itself through deviation from the character or will of God. Christian theology according to David Ray Griffin (2004:31) draws its concept of evil from the Old and New Testaments. The Christian Bible exercises “the dominant influence upon ideas about God and evil in the Western world.” Hans Schwarz (2001:42-43) stated that in the Old Testament, evil is understood to be an opposition to God as well as something unsuitable or inferior such as the leader of the fallen angels Satan. In the New Testament the Greek word *poneros* is used to indicate unsuitability, while *Lakos* is used to refer to opposition to God in the human realm. Officially, the Catholic Church extracts its understanding of evil from its canonical antiquity and the Dominican theological defines evil as the absence or privation of good. (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theological* translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers (1947) volume 3 q.72, a. 1, p 902). French-American Theologian Henri Blocher describes evil, when viewed as a theological concept, as an “unjustifiable reality. In common parlance, evil is ‘something’ that occurs in experience that ought not to be. Evil is that which keeps one from discovering the nature of God. It is believed that one must choose not to be evil to return to God. More recent scholars such as Alvin Plantinga and Richard Swinburne, have developed free will defenses and soul-making theodicies to address Freedom, and Evil. Bible offers various responses to evil, including lament, protest, and trust in God’s sovereignty. Scholars such as Walter Brueggemann and Kathleen O’Connor have explored the role of lament in the Bible, highlighting its function as a means of expressing grief and protest in the face of evil.

Christian Science believes that evil arises from a misunderstanding of the goodness of nature, which is understood as being inherently perfect if viewed from the correct (spiritual) perspective. Misunderstanding God’s reality leads to incorrect choices, which are termed evil. This has led to the rejection of any separate power being the source of evil, or of God as being the source of evil; instead, the appearance of evil is the result of a mistaken concept of good. Christian scientists argue that even the vilest person does not pursue evil for its own sake, but from the mistaken view point that he or she will achieve some kind of good thereby. The Bible views on the existence of evil have significant implications for contemporary society. Scholars such as N. T. Wright (2006) and Miroslav Volf (1996) have explored the relevance of biblical teachings on evil for issues such as justice, forgiveness,

and reconciliation. Through a survey of biblical perspectives, theodicy, and biblical responses to evil, this review has highlighted the richness and depth of biblical teachings on evil. As scholars continue to grapple with the problem of evil, the biblical views on this topic remain a vital and relevant resource.

Causes of Evil with Biblical Examples

1. Rebellion against God: Rebellion against God is a primary cause of evil. When humans reject God's authority and disobey His commands, evil enters the world. An example was Satan's rebellion against God (Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:12-19). What motivated Satan was pride and a desire for power and control. The consequence was that Satan was cast out of heaven, and evil entered the world.
2. Pride and Self-Exaltation: Pride and self-exaltation can lead to evil actions. When individuals prioritize their own interests and desires above God's will, they can become consumed by evil. Example was the story of Lucifer's fall (Isaiah 14:12-15). Lucifer's motivation was pride and a desire for power and control. The consequence was that Lucifer was cast out of heaven, and evil entered the world.
3. Envy and jealousy: When individuals resent others' success or possessions, they can become consumed by evil. Example was Cain's murder of Abel (Genesis 4:1-16). Cain's motivation was envy and jealousy towards Abel's acceptable offering. The consequence of his action was that he was cursed by God and he became a fugitive.
4. Greed and materialism: greed and materialism can lead to evil action. When individuals prioritize wealth and possessions above God's will, they can become consumed by evil. Example was the story of Achan's sin (Joshua 7:1-26). Achan was motivated by the greed for gold and silver. The consequence of Achan's sin led to the defeat of Israel and his own death.
5. Lack of faith and trust: When individuals doubt God's goodness and provision, they can become consumed by evil. Example was the story of the Israelites' unbelief (Numbers 13-14). This was motivated by lack of faith and trust in God's promise. The consequence was that Israelites were condemned to wander in the wilderness for 40 years.
6. Disobedience and rebellion: When individuals disobey God's command and rejects God's authority, it can lead to evil. Example was the story of Adam and Eve's disobedience (Genesis 3:1-7). As a result of the consequences of the sin and disobedience of Adam and Eve, sin and evil entered the world, and humanity was separated from God.

7. Human nature: When individuals are driven by their own desires and interests, they can become consumed by evil. Example was the story of the fall of Humanity (Genesis 3:1-7). This was as a result of desire for knowledge and power. As a result of this action of man, sin and evil entered into the world, and separated humanity from God.
8. Satan's influence: When individuals are tempted by Satan's lies and deceit, they can become consumed by evil. Example was the story of Job's suffering (Job 1-2)). The intention of Satan is to test Job's faith and destroy his relationship with God. The consequence was that Job suffered physically, emotionally, and spiritually, but ultimately trusted in God's sovereignty.
9. Environmental factors: When individuals are influenced by their surroundings and culture, they can become consumed by evil. Example was the story of Israelites' idolatry (Exodus 32:1-35). They were influenced by Egyptian culture and idolatry. The consequence was that the Israelites worshiped a golden calf, leading to God's judgment and wrath.
10. Lack of accountability: When individuals are not held responsible for their actions, they can become consumed by evil. Example was the story of King David's sin (2 Samuel 11:1-27). As a result of lack of accountability and a desire for power control, David's sin led to the death of Uriah and the consequences of his actions were felt for generations to come.

Natural Evil

Natural evil is evil for which "no non-divine agent can be held morally responsible for its occurrence". Natural evil refers to harm, suffering, or injustice caused by natural events, processes, or circumstances, rather than human actions.

Biblical examples of natural evil are:

1. The Flood (Genesis 6-9): The devastating flood that destroyed the earth and its inhabitants is an example of natural evil.
2. Another example was Hurricane Katrina (Isaac's Storm by Erikson): The catastrophic hurricane that ravaged New Orleans is an example of natural evil.

Nature of Natural Evil

Natural evil is generally taken to be the result of natural processes. The "evil" thus identified is evil only from the perspective of those affected and who perceive it as an affliction. Examples include cancer, birth defects, tornadoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, environmental degradation, and other phenomena which inflict suffering with apparently no accompanying mitigating good. Such phenomena inflict "evil" on victims with no

perpetrator to blame. In the Bible, God is portrayed as both the ultimate creator and perpetrator, since the “sun, moon and stars, celestial activities, clouds, dew, frost, hail, lightening, rain, snow, thunder, and wind are all subject to God’s command”. Examples of natural evils ascribe to God are as follows:

- Floods: God brought “a flood of waters on the earth” (Genesis 6:17)
- Thunder, hail, lightening: God “sent thunder and hail, and fire came down” (Exodus 9:23)
- Destructive wind: God sent a “great wind” that destroyed Job’s house and killed his family (Job 1:19)
- Earthquake: By the Lord “earth will be shaken” (Isaiah 13:13)
- Drought and famine: God will shut off rains, so neither land nor trees yield produce (Leviticus 26:19-20)
- Forest fires: God says, “say to the southern forest, “I will kindle a fire in you, and it shall devour every green tree in you and every dry tree” (Ezekiel 20:47)

The theism (e.g. Thomas Aquinas) distinguishes between God’s will and God’s permission, claiming that while God permits evil, he does not will it. This distinction is echoed by some modern open theists, e.g. Gregory A. Boyd, who writes, “Divine goodness does not completely control or in any sense will evil”. Aquinas partly explained this in terms of primary and secondary casualty, whereby God is the primary (or transcendent) cause of the world, but not the secondary (or immanent) cause of everything that occurs in it. Such accounts explain in the presence of natural affected not only human beings, but natural as well (Genesis 3: 16-19). Especially since the Reformation the distinction between primary and secondary causality, has been disputed, notably by John Calvin.

Among modern inheritors of this tradition, Mark R. Talbot ascribes evil to God: “God’s foreordination is the ultimate reason why everything comes about, including the existence of all evil persons and things and occurrence of any evil acts or events. Such models of God’s complete foreordination and direct willing of everything that leads to the doctrines of double predestination and limited atonement.

Natural versus Moral Evil

The question of whether natural disasters such as hurricanes might be natural or moral evil is complicated by new understandings of the effects, such as global warming, of our collective actions or events that were previously considered to be out of control. Nonetheless, even before the beginning of the industrial Revolution (which many believe was the beginning point of global warming), natural disasters (e.g. Earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis, flooding, fire, diseases, etc) occurred regularly, and cannot be ascribe to the

actions of humans. However, human actions exacerbate the evil effects of natural disasters. The World Wide Fund for nature (WWF) says human activity is a key factor that turns “extreme weather events into greater natural disaster”. For example, “deforestation and food plain development” by humans turn high rainfall into “devastating floods and mudslides”. When humans damage coasted reefs, remove mangroves, destroy dune systems, or clear coastal forests, “extreme coastal events cause much more loss of life and damage”. Damage by tsunami varied “according to the extent of reef protection and remaining mangrove coverage”.

In Europe, human development has “contributed to more frequent and regular floods”. In earthquakes, people often suffer injury or death because of “poorly designed and constructed buildings”. In the United States, wildfires that destroy lives and property are not “entirely natural”. Some fires are caused by human action and the damage inflicted is sometimes magnified by building “in remote, fire-prone areas”. Dusty conditions in the West that “can cause significant human health problem” have been shown to be “a direct result of human activity and not part of the natural system. Biblical example is the story of Job (Job 1-2). Job’s suffering is an example of natural evil, while the actions of his friends, who accuse him of sinning, illustrate moral evil. Based on these arguments, there is evidence that some “natural” evil results from human activity and therefore, contains an element of moral evil.

Challenge of Evil to Religious Belief

Natural evil (also non-moral or surd evil) is a term generally used in discussions of the problem of evil and theodicy that refers to states of affairs which, considered in themselves, are those that are part of the natural world, and so are independent of the intervention of a human agent. Both natural and moral evil are a challenge to religious believers. Many atheists claim that natural evil is proof that there is no God, at least not an omnipotent, omnibenevolent one; as such a being would not allow such evil to happen to his or her creation. However, the deist position states that intervention by God to prevent such actions (or any intervention) is not an attribute of God.

Some of the key challenges are:

1. The logical problem of evil

The existence of evil seems incompatible with the existence of an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good God. The contradiction is that if God is all-powerful, He should be able to prevent evil. If God is all-knowing, He should know about evil. If God is all-good, He should not want evil to exist.

2. The evidential problem of evil

The sheer amount of intensity of evil in the world, including natural disasters, diseases, and human atrocities, challenge the idea of an all-powerful and all-good God. The seemingly random and unfair distribution of evil, with some individuals and groups suffering more than others, raises questions about God's justice and fairness.

3. The emotional problem of evil

Personal experience of evil, such as the loss of a loved one or a traumatic event, can lead to emotional and spiritual crises. Empathizing with victims of evil can evoke feelings of outrage, sadness, and frustration, challenging one's faith in a benevolent God.

4. Theological challenges

The need to justify God's existence and nature in the face of evil poses a significant theological challenge. The idea of divine sovereignty, which affirms God's control over all events, raises questions about God's responsibility for evil. The concept of free will, which is often used to explain human evil, raises questions about God's responsibility for evil. The concept of free will, which is often used to explain human evil, raises questions about God's role in human decisions and actions.

5. Philosophical challenges

The paradox of evil, which posits that evil is both real and not real, challenges traditional notions of evil and God's relationship to it. The problem of moral evil, which questions why God allows human beings to commit evil acts, poses a significant philosophical challenge. The challenge of natural evil, which questions why God allows natural disasters and diseases to occur, raises questions about God's power and goodness.

Is God the Cause of Evil?

In Christianity, the question of whether God is the cause of evil is a contentious issue. Different theological perspectives offer varying answers. St Augustine's view was that God is not the cause of evil. Evil is a privation of good, a lack of being, and not a thing in itself. God, I created humanity with free will, which allowed for the possibility of sin and evil (Augustine, 413-426, *City of God* in Marcus Dods 1993). Calvinist view is that God is sovereign over all things, including evil. However, God is not the author of evil. Instead, God permits evil to exist as part of His larger plan to bring about good (Calvin, J. 1559 in Beveridge, 2008). Open Theism view is that God is not the cause of evil, but rather, evil arises from human free will and the complexity of the world. God is omniscient, and He responds to human decisions (e.g., Clark Pinnock, *The Openness of God*). Biblical considerations on whether God is the cause of evil: In the book of Isaiah 45:7, it is written "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these

things” (KJV). This verse can be interpreted as God being the cause of evil, but most scholars understand it as God being in control of all things, including the consequences of human actions. In the book of Lamentations 3:38, it is written: “Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and evil come”? (NIV). This verse acknowledges God’s sovereignty over all things, but does not necessarily imply that God cause evil. The question of whether God is the cause of evil is complex and debated among theologians. While some perspectives suggest God’s sovereignty over evil, others emphasize human free will and the complexity of the world. Ultimately, the Bible affirms God’s goodness, sovereignty and power, while also acknowledging the existence of evil and its consequences.

Bible Perspective of the Problems of Evil

The Bible makes it clear that evil is neither something God intended nor created. Rather, moral evil is a necessary possibility. If we are truly free then we are free to choose something other than God’s will—that is, we can choose moral evil. Scripture points out that there are consequences for defying the will of God. -personal, communal, physical, and spiritual. God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (Genesis 1:31 KJV). And the Lord command 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” (Genesis 2: 16-17 KJV). And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘you shall not eat of it, cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3: 17-19 ESV). Goodliness makes a nation great, but sin is a disgrace to any people”. (Proverbs 14:34). When a man’s folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord” (Proverbs 19:3 ESV). Matthew 5: 3-11, also known as the Beatitudes, is a passage from Jesus’ sermon on the mount. The Beatitudes, provides insight into the biblical view on the existence of evil. The Beatitudes acknowledge the existence of evil and its effects on humanity, including: spiritual poverty (v. 3), suffering and mourning (v. 4), persecution (v.10-11) etc. Beatitudes also reveal God’s response to evil such as: comfort and inheritance (v. 3, 4), mercy and satisfaction (v. 6-7), blessing and reward (v. 10-11). The Beatitudes emphasize the importance of humanity’s response to evil such as: humility and meekness (v. 3, 5), compassion and mercy (v. 7), pursuing righteousness (v. 6).

John 9: 1-3 describes a scene where Jesus encounters a man born blind. Jesus' disciples ask Him who sinned, the man or his parents, causing his blindness. Jesus responds that neither the man nor his parents sinned, but rather the blindness occurred so that God's works might be displayed in him. Romans 1: 18-28 describes God's wrath towards humanity's rejection of Him. God's wrath is revealed against godlessness and wickedness (v. 18). Humanity knows God through creation, but suppresses this truth (v. 19-20). People exchange God's glory for idolatry, leading to immorality and depravity (v. 21-27). God gives people over to their sinful desires, resulting in a downward spiral of sin (v. 24-28). Romans 5:12 this verse explains that sin entered the world through Adam's disobedience. That death resulted from sin. And, that death spread to all humanity because all people have sinned. Hebrews 2:2-3 This passage of the bible emphasizes the severity of disobedience under the Old Testament law and warns that neglecting God's salvation through Jesus Christ will have even more severe consequences. The Bible shows us that physical evils-sickness, famine, war, and death-are the result of moral evil. And moral evil is something human beings are all responsible for, on a personal and a communal level. We suffer because of our own sins at times. Other times, we suffer because of the sins of others. In some situations, we suffer from simple cause-and-effect. And we sometimes suffer for a special purpose, in order to bring hope or help-or a warning-to others.

The Bible perspective of the problem of evil is that "Evil" is meaningless without something to compare it to. For comparisons we have the original creation of God, called "very good" (Genesis 1:31). We have the standard of goodness in God Himself. And we have an explanation for the various causes of evil and suffering. Likewise, we see that this physical world is not all there is. Nor is this moral life all we have been made for. We can experience "persecution" (Matthew 5:4, 11) while looking to a greater, more permanent state of being "blessed". Of course, clearly supporting what evil is and why we experience it is not the same as resolving the problem of evil. However, even the supporting of evil in the context of Christian theology shows that our experience of evil and suffering is not incompatible with God's existence. Amplifying this proof is how the Bible goes beyond accurately describing evil to revealing God's action to remedy it.

Bible Opposes the Problem of Evil

Scripture shows that God did not create evil and does not promote it; rather, it describes God's actions in combating it. God limits the impact of evil, warns us of the dangers of evil, acts to stop the spread of evil, gives us an escape from evil, and will eventually defeat evil forever. Let's look at the following few bible passages as illustration: And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins and clothed them (Genesis 3:21 ESV). God's immediate response to humanity's rebellion (evil) was not condemnation, but provision and

care. By clothing Adam and Eve, God demonstrated His mercy and opposition to the destructive effects of evil, showing that He is a God of redemption and restoration, even in the face of sin. The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So, the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them". But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:5-8 ESV). The above passage describes the extreme wickedness of humanity, which grieved God's heart. Despite this, God showed mercy to Noah, demonstrating His opposition to evil and His desire to redeem and restore humanity. Then the Lord said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation. Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate, and seven pairs of the birds of the heavens also, male and female, to keep their offspring alive on the face of all the earth. For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground" (Genesis 7: 1-4 ESV). This passage highlights God's instructions to Noah to enter the ark with his family and a selection of animals, in order to save them from the coming flood that would destroy evil and wickedness on earth.

"See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not livelong in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess" (Deuteronomy 30: 15-18 ESV). This passage presents a clear choice between life and death, obedience and disobedience. God calls the Israelites to love and obey Him, promising blessings and life if they do, but destruction if they turn away and worship other gods. "When Jonah's warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we, will not perish." When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened". (Jonah 3: 6-10 NIV). This passage

describes the repentance of the people of Nineveh in response to Johah's warning, and God's subsequent mercy and forgiveness. This passage also highlights God's opposition to evil and His desire to redeem and restore those who turn away from wickedness. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" (Matthew 23:37 ESV). This verse highlights God's opposition to evil and His desire to redeem and restore humanity. "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6: 9-11 ESV). This passage lists various forms of evil and immoral behaviour that exclude people from God's kingdom. However, it also emphasizes the transformative power of faith in Jesus Christ, which can wash away past sins and bring believers into a right relationship with God. "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves" (Colossians 1:13 NIV). This passage affirms that believers have been rescued from Satan's power and darkness. They have been transformed into Jesus Christ's kingdom, where they now belong. "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who restrains it will do so until he is out of the way" (2 Thessalonians 2:7). This passage indicates that evil forces are already present, but a restraining power (likely the Holy Spirit or God's sovereign control) is limiting their activity, and will continue to do so until removed.

"Then the Lord knows how to rescue godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgement" (2 Peter 2:9 ESV). This verse emphasizes God's sovereignty, justice, and care for His people. "Then I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war" (Revelation 19:11 ESV). This verse marks the beginning of Jesus' triumphant return to earth, where He will ultimately defeat evil and establish God's kingdom. "And I saw a great white throne and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20: 11-15 KJV). This passage emphasizes accountability for one's

actions and the importance of having one's name written in the book of life through faith in Jesus Christ. "Then I saw a new Heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new", Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trust worthy and true" (Revelation 21: 1-5 ESV). This passage presents a vision of ultimate redemption, restoration, and triumph over evil. The Bible explains that God has acted to limit the impact of evil. He has given us clear instructions to avoid being evil.

Bible Resolves the Problem of Evil

Despite what some critics think, the so-called "problem of evil" is not something the Bible leaves unaddressed. Scripture not only refers to the problem of evil, but it offers several solutions to it.

By looking at the Bible's honest questioning of evil, God's response to evil, and the scriptural solution to evil, one can address this problem using almost nothing other than God's word. Of course, this question ties into theology and philosophy as well. There are multiple ways of coming to possible solutions and none is entirely complete all itself. According to the Bible, the experience of evil is something God understands and acknowledges. God's willingness to grant us the freedom of making our own choices also allows for the possibility of moral evil. Moral evil leads to physical evil. Even so, God has always acted to soften the blows that evil and suffering land on humanity. Rather than creating us as moral robots or dooming mankind for our sin or condoning our sin by leaving it unresolved, God chose the one and only way to settle the problem. He created us with the freedom to choose our actions, and then extended forgiveness to us. Forgiveness is the Christian answer to the problem of evil. Forgiveness is different from condemnation. It releases the condemned from punishment. Forgiveness is also different for excusing evil-it acknowledges that there is wrong to be made right. The basis of our forgiveness, the Cross, is the intersection of God's perfect moral character, love, and omnipotence. Since He chose to take our penalty upon Himself; all suffering and evil can be overcome. According to the Bible, the evil we experience in this life has already been defeated, and everyone has access to that victory. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into

the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment; the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God” (John 3: 16-21 ESV). This passage emphasizes God’s love for humanity, demonstrated through Jesus’ sacrifice, the offer of eternal life to those who believe in Jesus, and the consequence of not believing which is condemnation. This passage in summary is a corner stone of Christian theology, highlighting salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. “I have said these things to you, that you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33 ESV). In this passage Jesus assures believers that despite inevitable troubles in the world, they can have peace in Him because He has overcome the world.

Taken as a whole, as is intended, the Bible describes evil as something God allowed, but never condoned, for the sake of our free will. All through history, God has taken steps to limit the influence of evil. And, most importantly, God Himself took consequences of our sin, so every person can have access to forgiveness and solution. As a result, all sin, evil, and suffering will someday be completely ended. Beyond the philosophical or theological aspects of this issue, Scripture in and of itself goes a long way to neutralizing the power of the “problem of evil”.

Conclusion

The existence of evil is often presented as an enormous problem for those who believe in God, mostly because of various false dichotomies. God must, it is assumed, disallow all evil or He is evil Himself. God must immediately punish all evil doers and never trouble those who are innocent, or He is assumed not to be Omnipotent. In reality, these assumptions miss the actual means by which scripture resolves the problem of evil. As we have seen, the Bible acknowledges evil, correctly frames it, and shows how God opposes it. Most importantly, though, scripture explains how the existence of the Christian God defeats the problem of evil. The Bible consistently portrays God as a loving, just, and righteous God who is not wicked. His actions, judgments, and sovereignty are all motivated by His love and desire for humanity’s well-being.

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