

(The Real Truth) 1. the Real Truth About Evil

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen explores the origins of evil, God's purposes in allowing it, and the role of suffering in drawing us closer to Him.

Scripture: Genesis 1:1, Ezekiel 28:12

Topics: "God's Sovereignty", "The Nature of Evil"

Description

Zac Poonen addresses the profound mystery of evil in a world created by a good and wise God, exploring its origins in the heart of Lucifer, who fell from grace due to pride and rebellion. He explains that God allows evil to exist not out of indifference, but to draw humanity closer to Him, using suffering and trials to lead people to seek salvation. Poonen emphasizes that free will and conscience are essential for moral beings, and that God uses the challenges posed by evil to purify His children and fulfill His divine purposes. Ultimately, the sermon reveals that even in the presence of evil, God's love and wisdom prevail, guiding believers toward eternal salvation.

Transcript

One of the greatest mysteries in the world that people have tried hard to understand is the mystery of evil. How did evil begin in a world that was created by an all-wise and good God?

Why does evil have the upper hand in every part of the world? And why is there so much sickness, poverty, sorrow and suffering everywhere? Is God not interested in helping us? These are questions that need an answer. And the Bible gives us an answer.

But before we proceed further, let us be clear about certain facts concerning God.

God has existed from all eternity. He had no beginning, for He lives beyond the limits of what we know as time. That may be difficult for us to understand. But that is only because our minds cannot contain God's wisdom - just like a cup cannot contain the water in an ocean.

The very first verse in the Bible begins like this:

"In the beginning God..."(Genesis chapter 1, verse 1). (Genesis is the first of the 66 books in God's Word, the Bible. All the references that are given in brackets throughout this booklet are referring to one of the books of the Bible.)

The Bible does not even try to explain the fact that God existed from all eternity past. It just states it as a fact.

God is revealed in the Bible as One Who desires a personal relationship with us human beings. He is not a man, as we understand persons. He is Spirit, infinite in every way and unchanging at all times in His character. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, infinitely wise, infinitely loving, and infinitely pure.

God's infinite love is totally unselfish. And so from the very beginning He desired to share His joy and His happiness with others.

And so He created living beings. First of all, He created millions of angels, so that He might share His glory and His happiness with them. That was long before He created any man.

Among the angels, God created one to be their leader. His name was Lucifer. That name, although it is considered an evil name now, was once the name of the most glorious, the wisest and the most beautiful of all the angels. He was the head of all the angels.

The Lord said concerning Lucifer:

"You were the perfection of wisdom and beautyI appointed you to be the anointed guardian angel.... You were perfect in all you did from the day you were created until that time when wrong was found in you" (Ezekiel chapter 28, verses 12 to 15).

Unlike the stars and the trees that God had created, Lucifer and the other angels had a free will that could choose whether to obey God or to disobey Him.

Free will is the first essential for a person to be a moral being. Stars and trees cannot do either good or evil, because they are not able to choose for themselves. They obey God's laws implicitly, because they have been created without freedom of choice. Therefore they cannot be sons of God either. A robot that a scientist makes may obey every order that he has programmed it to do, and it will never complain - unlike his own son! But that robot can still never become his son!

The second essential for a person to be a moral being is conscience. Birds and animals can choose to do things voluntarily. But they are still not moral beings because they do not have a conscience. So they cannot be either holy or sinful. Therefore they cannot be children of God, for God is a moral Being.

In fact those birds and animals can't be your children either.

You may train a dog to obey every command you give it. But that dog can still never become your son, because your son must have your own nature - and your dog doesn't have that.

But God made man in His likeness. That gives us the possibility of becoming His children.

Conscience is that voice within us that reminds us that we are moral beings, and convicts us when we violate God's laws.

The angels were created with both a free will and a conscience. Thus they were unique at that time in God's creation, for they were moral beings. Lucifer their leader, however, soon began to have thoughts and ambitions that were not good.

This is where evil first began in this universe.

Not only were Lucifer's thoughts not good, they were proud thoughts, rebellious thoughts and thoughts of discontentment.

The universe had been perfectly pure up until then. But now evil reared its ugly head in the heart of a created being who had been created with a free will.

Remember that evil had its beginning first in the heart. There was no external action initially. And evil begins in the heart, even today.

Remember too that the first sin that brought evil into the world was pride. God then cast out Lucifer from His immediate presence. And Lucifer was called Satan from that moment.

The Bible describes Satan's fall thus :

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down - mighty though you were.... For you said to yourself, 'I will ascend to heaven and rule the angels. I will take the highest throne. I will climb to the highest heavens and be like the Most High. But instead you will be brought down to the pit of hell, down to its lowest depths" (Isaiah chapter 14, verses 12 to 15).

But by the time Lucifer was cast out, he had managed to get a number of the other angels also to join him in his rebellion. There were millions of angels who joined him - in fact one-third of all the angels in heaven (as we read in Revelation chapter 12, verse 4). And so God cast them and Lucifer out. These fallen angels are the evil spirits (demons) that harass and trouble people today.

Perhaps you yourself have been troubled by evil spirits or by others doing black magic on you. If so, the Bible has good news for you. You can be perfectly free from their harassment forever.

Read through this book carefully and by the time you reach the end of it, you will see what miracles God can do for you.

The question that some may now ask is, "If Satan is the cause of all the evil in the world, why doesn't God destroy Satan and all the other evil spirits?"

God can certainly do that in a moment, if He wants to.

But He doesn't.

This proves that God, in His infinite wisdom, has a purpose in allowing Satan and these demons to exist. Part of that purpose is to use Satan to make life on this earth difficult, insecure and dangerous for man so that people turn to God and think of eternity instead of seeking their comfort here on this earth.

If life on this earth had been very comfortable, with no sickness, suffering, poverty, or misery, hardly anyone would have thought about God at all. So God uses all the misery and insecurity of earthly life to make us think about Him and to turn to Him in our need.

Even the problems, the sicknesses and the trials that Satan brings into your life are all permitted by a loving God to make you turn to Him. They are in that sense an expression of God's love for you.

This is the message of the Bible.

I heard a story of a businessman who had once been close to God. He drifted away from God, as his business prospered. The elders in his church spoke to him repeatedly and tried to turn him back to the Lord. But he was too occupied with his business. One day a poisonous snake bit the youngest of his three sons, and the child became seriously sick. Even the doctors gave up all hope. Then the father was really worried, and sent for one of the elders of the church to pray for the child. The elder was a wise man. He came and prayed, "Lord, thank You for sending this snake to bite this child - because I could never get this family to think about You at all. But what I could not accomplish in six years, this snake has now done in a moment! Now that they have learnt their lesson, Lord, heal the child. And grant that they will never need any more snakes to remind them of You again."

There are people who do not think about God at all, until one day they are suddenly taken to a hospital with cancer or some other serious sickness. Then, all of a sudden they begin to think of God and turn to Him for salvation. Incurable diseases, sicknesses, poverty and many other evils in this world have all been used by God to turn people away from their sins. Thus God leads them to find their eternal home in heaven. That is how God uses the evil things that Satan does to save people from Satan's clutches and to bring them eternal salvation.

Thus God makes a fool of Satan again and again.

Satan is pushed into the very pit that he digs for others.

Another reason why God allows Satan to exist is to purify God's children.

Consider the example of fire? We know that millions of people have died through being burnt in fires in the history of the world. Yet no-one stops using fire, because of that. Why? Because it is through fire that food is cooked and that automobiles and airplanes and machines run. Gold too can be purified only through fire. So fire, though harmful and dangerous, can be put to very good uses.

In the same way although Satan is evil and seeks to lead people astray, God still makes use of him. Satan is permitted to test God's children through various fiery trials and temptations, so that they can become holy and pure, like gold put through the fire.

So we see that even though God can remove all the evil in the world in a moment, He does not do so, because He is accomplishing His glorious purposes through them all.

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