



Apologetics Wednesdays

LESSON 2 – THEODICY: THE PROBLEM OF EVIL – PART II

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Spring 2022

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DEFENDING YOUR FAITH – OUTLINE OF LESSONS

Defending Your Faith with Noel R. Vincent, M.A. in Christian Apologetics			
<i>Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Issues & Questions Addressed</i>
1	23-Mar	Theodicy: The Problem of Evil Part I	Did God create evil? Understanding the Skeptic's #1 Argument Why does God allow evil?
2	30-Mar	Theodicy: The Problem of Evil Part II	Can any good come from pain and suffering? Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do we suffer for Adam's sin?
3	06-Apr	Doctrine of Hell & Eternal Punishment	What exactly is hell: Divine Principle or Brutal Reality? Can a good God really punish people forever? What about people who have never heard the Gospel?
4	13-Apr	Arguing for God's Existence	Big Bang Cosmology: Why does anything exist at all? C. S. Lewis's Moral Argument Intelligent Design: Theory or Evidence of a Divine Creator?
5	20-Apr	Doctrine of the Trinity	Can anyone really understand trinitarianism? Defending the Triune Godhead Defeating False Gods
6	27-Apr	The Historical Jesus: Nature & Existence	Hypostasis: Understanding the God-Man Refuting False Resurrection Hypotheses Do credible, non-biblical, historical accounts of Jesus exist?

LESSON 2: THEODICY: THE PROBLEM OF EVIL – PART II

Introduction: Good evening, and welcome back. Thank you for joining us tonight. We are recording the sessions and are making my lesson notes available. Our goals for this 6-week study: to strengthen your faith, to equip you with a new confidence, and to help you become a thought-leader in your circles of influence.

SESSION 2.1 – THE ARGUMENT FROM EVIL: DUAL FALSE CLAIMS

A. The Dual False Claims:

1. God is the creator/author of evil.
2. There is no all-loving, all-powerful God.

B. **Fallacy of the Dual Claims:** Skeptics are capable of believing two things at once that are opposed to each other. On the one hand they claim God created evil, and on the other, that He doesn't exist because evil does.

1. Which is it? If God created evil, and its existence is the reason for His non-existence, how did He created it, if He never existed in the first place? To deny God's existence is to deny His creation of evil. To claim God created evil is to admit His existence.
2. Circular Reasoning: A fallacy of logic in which an argument fails to persuade because the premise/observation provide no independent ground or evidence for the conclusion.

C. False Claim #1 – God Created Evil:

1. Skeptics Argue:

- a. (F) God created everything. (*not Himself, not evil*)
- b. (F) Evil is a thing. (*it's only what remains when good is removed*)
- c. (F) God created evil. (*He didn't – evil isn't a created thing*)

2. Dismantling False Claim #1 – God Created Evil:

a. Refuting the Claim:

- (F) God created everything. (not Himself, not evil)
- (F) Evil is a thing. (it's the privation of good)
- (F) God created evil. (evil isn't a created thing)

- b. Explaining the Refutation: God created only good, substantive things (angels/Satan, then the universe/Adam and Eve). Evil is not a substantive thing, but rather the privation of a good, which ought to be present in the thing, but was forfeited when God, who is the source of all good, withdrew the good He imparted to the thing, leaving it evil.

D. False Claim #2 – There is no all-powerful, all-loving God.

1. Skeptics Argue:

- a. Simple Version: (wrongly assumes what God would/wouldn't do)
- (F) God would not allow evil in the world.
 - (T) There is evil in the world.
 - (F) Thus, there is no god.
- b. Common Version: (wrongly assumes who and what God is/isn't)
- All-loving/powerful god would not allow evil in the world.
 - There is evil in the world.
 - Thus, there is no all-loving/powerful god.
- c. How do these arguments differ? The Simple argues against God's existence, while the Common against the existence of a particular type of god - wrongly presumed to describe the God of the Bible.

2. Dismantling False Claim #2 – There is No All Loving and Powerful God:

Formulation of each version is unsound, making false assumptions in their premises/observations. Even if the conclusions were correct, the arguments would still be unsound because the conclusions could not follow logically from the premises.

- a. It is not true that God would not allow evil. He does.
- b. It is not true of Christianity that God is all-loving and all-powerful to the extents inferred in the premise, which suggests that a). we claim God's love is so great that He would not allow evil; and b). we claim His power should be able to prevent it. Love cannot demand the non-existence of evil solely on the basis of *ought*.
- c. Only atheists and the skeptics formulate a god who would not allow evil – Christians, Jews, and Muslims all disagree.

SESSION 2.2 – THEODICY: WHY GOD ALLOWS EVIL – TWO GOOD REASONS

- A. **Theodicy:** From the French word, *théodicée* (thayo' dee say') means *righteous judgment of God*. Theo = God + diké = right judgment. Theodicy is the defense of God's righteousness/goodness, in light of the observable evil and suffering.
- B. **The Free Will Argument: Evil comes from free choice.**
1. **Free will is the power to choose:** either a). between available action options, or b). not to act at all.
 2. **Three views of the nature of free will:**
 - a. In *determinism*, a free will act is caused by something other than the actor. But determinism eliminates human responsibility, since acts are not caused by oneself, but rather by another actor.
 - b. In *indeterminism*, a free will act is uncaused, which is nonsensical, since the first rule of reason demands that all actions are caused.
 - c. In *self-determinism*, a free will act is caused by oneself. *This is the correct view of free will actions.*
 3. **Free Moral Agents:** God created humans as free moral agents. He does not make our choices, or perform our actions for us. But God did not give us the power of free will choice and action irresponsibly.
 - a. He gave us laws with consequences/rewards (carrots/sticks) to influence our choices. His law reveals His will, and His will for us.
 - b. He gave us a conscience. **Conscience (con = with, science = knowledge)** refers to our knowledge of the truth, and it's influence on our behaviour. It is difficult for humans to act in a manner inconsistent with our consciences (knowledge of the truth), and that in direct correlation to the strength of our conscience.
 - c. He gave us His Word to construct and strengthen our conscience, and His Holy Spirit to enforce it upon us (De 6:4-9).
 4. **Without free will, there is no point to creation.** God desires a relationship. Thus, He did not create us as toys or robots, but rather in His image with a free will to enjoy Him, and Him us. With no free will to choose/reject Him, there is no real basis for true relationship with God.
 5. **God created the best of all possible worlds.** The best possible world required the human free will and its by-products, evil and suffering.
 6. **God could have prevented evil and suffering by not creating at all.** Parents desire children for the joy of their love and companionship, knowing that their children may suffer from crime, disease, poverty, and many other hardships. Yet, they still have them, and so it is with God.

7. **God is love.** He knows and experiences love in community of the triune godhead. His love drives His creative impulse. He created us out of His desire to share Himself in love. Four New Testament words for love :
 - a. **Storge** – familial love between grand/parents/children, siblings.
 - b. **Phileo** – brotherly love, the affection we have for our friends.
 - c. **Eros** – erotic attraction that seeks to possess; literature, film.
 - d. **Agape** – unmerited, loves the unlovely, no demands, God’s love.
8. **A life is better than no life.** For the vast majority of people through the ages, it is better to have been created and to have endured some suffering while enjoying life, than never to have been created. Few people truly wish they had never been born.

C. THE GLORY OF GOD ARGUMENT:

When sin, evil, and suffering emerged, God’s hidden moral attributes became visible. God is glorified in the display of His attributes. If sin never entered the world, we would not fully know God. To know Him is to know His worth, character, majesty, and power, and His moral attributes – which command and deserve our worship.

1. Goodness – without evil, God’s true goodness cannot be fully seen.
2. Grace – without condemned souls, God cannot dispense/show grace.
3. Holiness – without corruption of humanity, we can’t see His holiness.
4. Impeccability – without our sin, He can’t demonstrate His inability to sin.
5. Jealousy – without pursuit of false gods, God’s jealousy remains hidden.
6. Justice – without offenders and victims, God cannot bring justice.
7. Love – human indifference is displaced by God’s love shown in the cross.
8. Mercy – without suffering of humanity, God can’t mercifully relieve it.
9. Providence – with no hunger/need, God’s provision remains unseen.
10. Righteousness – without impurity, God can’t impute His righteousness.
11. Veracity – without deception and lies, God’s truth cannot correct them.
12. Wrath – without unrepentent sin, God’s wrath cannot be unleashed.

A. **Question 1 – Why Do Humans Suffer for Adam’s Sin ?** Riddle: *An arctic expedition discovered two bodies covered in animal skins protruding from the polar ice cap. The bodies were thoroughly examined and determined to be a male and a female. They appeared to be 6,000 – 7,000 years old, but well preserved. They each had signs of significant aging, scarred and calloused hands, and so forth. After the examination, a biblical anthropologist on the team declared, "We’ve found Adam and Eve." She was right, course, but how did she know? No belly buttons.*

1. **The Fall:** The first humans, Adam and Eve, were given freedom to live their lives with one restriction, not to eat of the fruit of a particular tree on pain of death. They did so anyway, and died. Their deaths were:
 - a. **Of the Soul** (soulish death) - immediate: corruption of their nature, they became evil; Ephesians 4:22 *"that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit"*
 - b. **Of the Spirit** (spiritual death) - immediate: estrangement from God. Romans 6:23 *"For the wages of sin is death."* 2Thess 1 :9 *"These people will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."*
 - c. **Of the Body** (physical death) - deferred: decline and ultimate demise of their bodies through aging and disease, or unnatural causes (accident, murder, suicide, war, etc.).
2. **Eve Merely Bent a Rule:**
 - a. 1Ti 2:12-14 *"I do not allow a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a wrongdoer."*
 - b. She *"fell into transgression"* (Gr. – **ginomai**, become + **parabasis**, used metaphorically to bend a rule) The NASB is accurate here, softening Eve’s deception. She did wrong, but the inspired vocabulary used by Paul softens the presentation of her offense. She became a rule-bender; Adam brought sin and death.
3. **Adam Gets the Credit: Rom 5:12** *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so **death spread to all mankind, because all sinned.**"*

4. **Seminal Identity/Natural Identity (guilt):** We suffer the effects of Adam's sin in one sense because all human beings were present in Adam's loins (body) when he sinned. Life comes from life; life begets life. There is an unbroken chain of human DNA, which passes down through cells (flesh) from generation to generation. Adam's body developed cells containing his DNA and passed them as seed to Eve, who's body combined them in an egg developed by her body, and containing her DNA, and the combined cells became their son Seth. Seth's and his wife's bodies did the same thing, passing DNA through cells of seed and egg, generation to generation, and so on all the way down to you and me. Since the cells that make up our bodies originally came from Adam's body, there is the principle that we were all in his body when he sinned (Rom 5 :14).
- a. A newborn baby bears the image of its parents both in its physical appearance and in its DNA. This is so because the child is the actual flesh, blood, and bone of the parents. Each child is made up of living cells which are produced both by and within, and are thus a part of, their parent's bodies.
 - b. Even prior to a child's conception, it lives, in a sense, in its parents' bodies. Consider Heb 7:9-10 in which Abraham, the first Jew, pays a tithe to the priest Melchizedek. Abraham paid the tithe, but his descendant, Levi, the father of the Levitical priesthood, also is credited with paying it : *"And, so to speak, through Abraham even **Levi, who received tithes, has paid tithes, for he was still in the loins of his forefather when Melchizedek met him.**"*
5. **Seminal Generation (corrupt nature):** We suffer for Adam's sin in another sense because we inherited a corrupt nature from him. This is why we require, not only forgiveness for the sins we've committed, but we also require regeneration because our inherited nature is corrupt and needs replacing.
- a. All humans descended from Adam, progenitor of the human race. His sin and subsequent corruption preceded the conception of his children. Thus, all of his descendants inherit his corrupt nature and are destined for death. Rom 5:14 *"Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, **even over those who had not sinned** in the likeness of the violation committed by Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come."*
 - b. Adam's sin brought the corruption of the human nature into the world, so corruption extends to descendant of Adam.

- c. A corrupt nature is sufficient to warrant God's death sentence (condemnation) because it is the spiritual state of all human beings prior to their having committed any sins on their own, irrespective of whether or not they ever do commit any sins of their own.
6. **Federal Headship (representative):** We suffer for Adam's sin because all humans are represented by him as their father and federal head of the human race. Jesus was the second Adam (representative) of mankind (1Co 15:45-47).
- a. **Rom 5:17-18** *For if by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one [Adam], much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. So then, as **through one offense the result was condemnation to all mankind, so also through one act of righteousness the result was justification of life to all mankind.***
 - b. As the federal head of our government, the President of the United States has the power to make war against foreign nations. He doesn't have to check with us first. If he starts a war, the entire country goes to war, and many of us will die. We can't escape the consequences of a war in which our federal head may choose to engage us.
 - c. During WWII, the United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Even though hundreds of thousands of inhabitants of those cities never served in Japan's military, they died nonetheless because of our response to the actions of their emperor. As descendants from Adam, we cannot escape the predicament into which our federal head has thrust us. Adam chose to go to war with God when he made the decision to sin. His descendants suffer the consequences.

B. Question 2 – Why do bad things happen to good people?

1. **There are no good people.** All humans have corrupt natures from Adam and are evil at birth, and it's evident from at least two observations.
 - a. Children do not have to be taught to misbehave. They have to be taught to behave because their nature drives them to misbehave.
 - b. Laws exist to control us and demonstrate our corrupt nature.
2. **Calamities happen because the universe is corrupted.** At The Fall, God cursed the universe with the decay – "cursed is the ground" (Ge 3:17) – because man defiled it. This is *entropy* (second law of thermodynamics).
3. **People harm others because of their corrupt nature.** At The Fall, man died spiritually, became estranged from God, and lost the good God imparted. Bad things only happen to bad people because only bad people exist.

C. Question 3 – What Good Comes from Evil, Pain, and Suffering?

1. Pain in the loss of a loved one is evidence of the love (good) one had.
2. In exercise, muscle tissue is torn, producing pain. As the body heals itself, muscles are repaired, built up, and stronger. No pain, no gain.
3. When God chastises us for our sins, we grow into more godly people.
4. Suffering brings people together. Consider comrades in arms at war, or families who have struggled together through difficult tragedies.
5. Pain protects us. We avoid behaviors that produce pain because pain indicates we are doing something harmful to ourselves.
6. Undeserved suffering produces patience, endurance, humility, the love of virtue, noble character, mercy, grace, justice, benevolence, etc.
7. In suffering, we identify with Christ through fellowship. (Php 3:10) *"that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death"*. Also see 1Pe 4:12-19.
8. God is glorified in suffering because then can He fully demonstrate His good, justice, power, forgiveness, mercy, grace, kindness, provision, etc.
9. Our sufferings produce in us a future glory that will far outweigh the sufferings of this life. (2Co 4:17-18) *"For our momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."*

D. **Conclusion:** These three hard questions are **no longer difficult**, as you now understand the origin, nature, reason, necessity, and even benefits of the existence of evil (not of evil itself). You can use what you have learned this evening to answer most of the difficult questions regarding the problem of evil.

Appendix I – Timeline of Evil

Creator	Created Things	Status	Timeline	Scripture
God	Perfect Satan + Angels	Good	Before the Universe Existed	Job 38:4-7
	Perfect Humans + World		After Satan + Angels	Gen 1-2
Satan	Fallen Satan + Demons	Evil	After Creation of the Universe	Isa 14, Eze 28, Rev 12
Adam	Fallen Humans + World		At The Fall	Gen 3

Timeline of the Emergence of Evil: Before dismantling the argument that God created evil, it is critical to first distinguish between a). God’s creation of things that existed prior to the creation of the physical universe, namely angels and Satan, which were “good” when He created them; b). God’s creation of the physical universe in Genesis 1, which was “good” when He created it; and c). the post-fall state of Satan and his demons (evil), and the post-fall state of the humans and the universe in which we presently reside (evil). Order of events:

1. God created angels in the spirit realm, and they were good.
2. God created the physical universe and humans, and they were good.
3. Satan sinned in the spirit realm and became evil at his own hand.
4. Adam sinned in the physical universe and became evil at his own hand.

Angels & Demons:

- A. The creation of angels, including Satan, occurred prior to the creation of the universe in Gen 1, and we can infer from God’s goodness that they were good. Angels applauded the creation. (Job 38:4-7) *"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me if you have understanding. Who set its measurements since you know? Or who stretched the measuring line over it? On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the **morning stars** sang together, and all the **sons of God** shouted for joy?"*
- B. The ontological nature of angels is not well defined in Scripture. We know that they were not made in God’s image, and thus, do not have spirits as imparted of His nature by God to human. To refer to fallen angels (demons) as evil or unclean “spirits” is merely a way of describing their non-physical incorporeality (unembodiedness). They enjoy a substance, which is neither deity nor humanity, and thus is utterly unique among God’s created beings.
- C. Satan ("the annointed cherub") was probably the archangel (or something similar) prior to Michael. Satan sinned in his vanity, seeking to become like God, and he used his free will wrongly, so God withdrew the good He had imparted to Satan at his creation, and Satan became evil. Sometime after the creation of the physical universe, but prior to The Fall of Man, Satan

was banished from heaven. His sin occurred in the non-physical realm, not in the created physical universe. Thus, his sin did not corrupt the universe. That occurred later when Adam sinned as part of the physical universe.

- D. (Ezekiel 28:12-17) *"You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond ... On the day that you were created They were prepared. You were the anointed [mimshach, close to meshiyach "messiah"] cherub who covers, ... You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you. ... And you sinned; Therefore I have cast you as profane From the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, you covering cherub, From the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was haughty because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor."*
- E. After the creation of the universe, Satan led one-third of the angels (now demons) to rebel against God, who ejected them from heaven ("hurled ... to the earth" - Rev 12:3-4) *"Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven crowns. And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and hurled them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her Child."*

The Universe:

- A. At the conclusion of the creation of the universe (on the 7th day), evil existed, but only in the non-physical realm, not in the physical universe God had just created. Satan plotted to bring evil into the world by the deception of Eve, and the volitional sin of Adam. God did not create evil. It first emerged in the non-physical realm through Satan's loss of perfection. It first appeared in the physical universe at The Fall. Thus, God did not create everything that exists today in the sense folks understand things to exist.
- B. When God created angels, they were perfect, good, and without evil, until unrighteousness was found in Satan, and then one-third of the angels followed him, lost their "good", and were cast to the earth. When God created the universe, it was also perfect, good, and without evil, until The Fall of Man in the Garden. Satan was cast to the earth, but sin entered through Adam.