

Sermon Study Guide

Good and Evil - and Where Does Free Will Fit?

Overview

One of the questions we grapple with most is why do bad things happen to seemingly good people? It doesn't seem fair. Or, How can a loving, all-powerful God allow evil?

Likely, we've all had times in our lives when we question God about this and think "if I was God I would have not allowed this to happen." So, why doesn't God just step in and wipe out evil?

Scripture

Romans 3:10, 8:28, 12:21; Psalm 14:10, 143:2; 1 John 1:8; 1 Peter 1:7; ; Genesis 1:26

Examination

1. Who are these good people we speak of? We assume there are people who are good. Are there? Read Romans 3:10, Psalm 14:1, Psalm 143:2 and 1 John 1:8
2. How do we determine what is a 'bad' thing? Sometimes things that appear bad, aren't.
 - a. Is it bad because it's what we don't want? Or because it's hard; or makes us sad or hurts?
 - b. Sometimes what we think is bad actually ends up being good. Read 1 Peter 1:7
 - i. Why do we need to go through this testing Peter mentions in the first place? Because of our corruption and we need redeemed and "repaired"
 - c. Bad (or evil) is that which contradicts\rebels against God's righteousness and holiness.
3. What exactly is "evil"?
 - a. The simplest way to think of evil is 'the absence of good'. God is good.
 - b. Evil, in its absence of good, rejects the righteousness of God.
 - c. If, as we discussed earlier, no one is righteous, then people live in a way that rejects righteousness and must overcome this evil in their lives
4. Does the presence of evil prove there is no God? Consider the following:
 - a. When you say there is evil you are assuming there is such a thing as good
 - b. When you say there is good you are assuming there is a moral law with which to differentiate between good and evil
 - c. When you say there's a moral law you must posit or grant there is a moral law giver
 - d. But that is who people want to say doesn't exist
 - e. Working backwards therefore:
 - i. If there is no moral law giver there is no moral law
 - ii. If there is no moral law there's no good
 - iii. If there is no good, there's no evil - So, what exactly are we asking again?
5. So, if He exists, why would an all-loving, all powerful God allow evil things to happen? What would you have him do differently? In order to prevent an act of evil God must interfere and indeed He does sometimes, but to prevent all acts of evil (which ones do we determine He should prevent?), He must remove our free will. Do we really want this?

It is true that without free will we couldn't sin, but we also couldn't love or experience love. The ability to love and be loved is the ultimate experience of joy and goodness. Love will always ultimately overcome evil. There may be pain along the way, but the joy of love, provided by our free will, overcomes.

"Love is the peak of all intellectual and emotional alignment" Ravi Zacharias

Practical Application

1. Share a time something happened that you thought was bad but turned out to be good?
2. Share a time when a difficult testing or trial made you stronger.

3. Pray each day this week that God will show you how to use your free will to live for Him.