

The Problem of Evil

I can give you many excellent answers from Scripture and also from other information sources as to why God allows evil to exist, seemingly unchecked, in this world. But none of these answers completely satisfy me. I often agonize over this. Even though I know that things will come out alright “in the end,” I have difficulty understanding and accepting why God would allow His beloved children to endure extreme forms of suffering, hardship and deprivation. Could the lessons learned in this sometimes very painful “crucible” of life experience ever justify the “means” to that end?

The obvious answer, and the answer that I most often fall back on, is this. The greater the pain, the greater the gain. The greater the evil, the more we appreciate the good. The love of God is most appreciated when contrasted with the hatred of man. Victory and success are all the sweeter when contrasted with the pain and effort required for their attainment. Joy has no meaning unless contrasted with sorrow. To fully experience God’s love and forgiveness, we first must find ourselves in need of it. I could go on and on. It seems that Godly attributes are not obtainable except by first experiencing what it is like to be a sinner and separated from God (at least in our conscious awareness).

Another answer to the question of why God allows sin, suffering and evil is that technically they don’t exist. We only experience suffering and evil as in a dream. The physical world that we think is our home is actually an illusion, albeit a very useful one. Our consciousness actually resides in an eternal realm outside of this space/time universe. When our physical bodies, which aren’t actually physical at all, die we will wake up from the dream, as it were, and find ourselves back at home in the heavenly realms. We will have become better for having had the experience. It’s sort of like what happens when we dream at night. Many scientists and sleep experts who study the nature and purpose of dreaming have pointed out that one of the purposes of dreaming is problem-solving. Often we go to bed confused or troubled about one or more problems we might be facing, and then wake up in the morning able to view those same issues with greater clarity and understanding.

That is not to say that when we “wake up” from this dream of life our characters are completely changed and fully reformed. The process does continue, I believe, into the ages, and will not be complete until the end of the ages, metaphorically speaking, at which time we will be fully formed into the image of Christ. At that time, which might be a different time for each individual, all will acknowledge Christ as Lord and will be presented by Him faultless before the throne of God.