

Foundations for Christian Life

Orthopraxy: Suffering

Quick Review

- Christians are _____ who _____ Jesus.
- Rightly interpreted & applied, the Bible is the _____ for a Christian
- People are created in God's _____ and thus have _____ & _____
- All mankind now lives under the curse of _____ & _____ sin.
- Christians worship the One _____ God
- Jesus is fully _____ and fully _____
- Faith is trusting the _____ about Christ AND trusting in the _____ Christ
- Faith is a verb (an act of the will) but it is _____ a _____

If God is Good then why is there evil & injustice?

How long, **LORD**, must I cry for help?
But you do not listen!
I call out to you, "Violence!"
But you do not intervene!
Why do you force me to witness injustice?
Why do you put up with wrongdoing?
Habakkuk 1:2-3

How long will you judge unjustly
And show partiality to the wicked?
- Psalm 82:2

Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power? Their offspring are established in their presence, and their descendants before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, and no rod of God is upon them. - Job 21:7-9

You who are of purer eyes than to see evil
and cannot look at wrong,
why do you idly look at traitors
and remain silent when the wicked swallows up
the man more righteous than he?
- Habakkuk 1:13

Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape. - Micah 3:15

Righteous are you, O **LORD**,
when I complain to you;
yet I would plead my case before you.
Why does the way of the wicked prosper?
Why do all who are treacherous thrive?
Jeremiah 12:1

What is Evil?



What is Evil?

- **Evil**

- it is not a thing/substance.
- it is a privation (absence/removal/corruption/misuse) of the good.
- God created what is good but did NOT create evil (only its potential to exist).

- **Morale Evil**

- the privation of rightly relating to each other
- people misusing freedom
 - to will & commit acts that violate a moral standard.

- **Natural Evil**

- evil that results from nonhuman acts



Are Evil and Suffering the same?

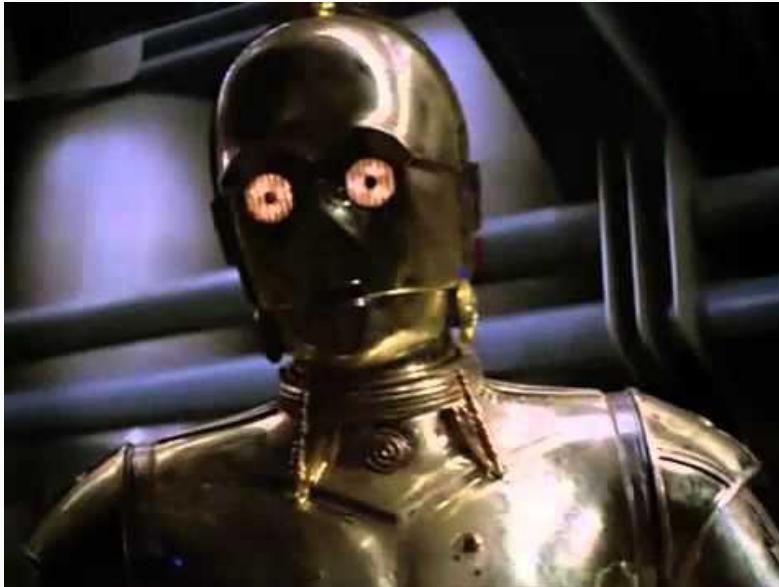


Is Suffering always morally wrong?

- Is suffering *you experience* morally wrong when it's result of:
 - a morally evil act you committed?
 - another's morally evil act committed against you?
 - being wrongly accused of a morally evil act?
 - working hard physically?
 - doing good for others?
 - a natural evil?

Dealing with Evil and Suffering

Don't call me a mindless philosopher ...



We seem to be made to suffer. It's our lot



"The main argument against the existence of God has always been the argument from evil..." - Richard Swinburne



Word for Word Bible Comics: Judges

The problem of vindicating an omnipotent and omniscient God in the face of evil ... is insurmountable.

The entirety of atheism is contained in this response.

- Sam Harris

The logical problem of evil

1. God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent.
2. An omniscient being has prior knowledge of evil to prevent it.
3. An omnipotent being has the ability to prevent evil.
4. An omnibenevolent being has the desire to prevent evil.
5. There is evil.

Therefore, there is no God.

At least not the Christian God possessing all these attributes

Which attribute of God can we give up?

- Omniscience
 - ... now I declare new things before they spring forth ... (Isaiah 42:9)
- Omnipotent
 - ... I act and who can reverse it? (Isaiah 43:13)
- Omnid benevolent
 - God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5)

The solution to the problem

Find a *morally sufficient* reason for God to allow evil



Free Will makes both God & evil possible

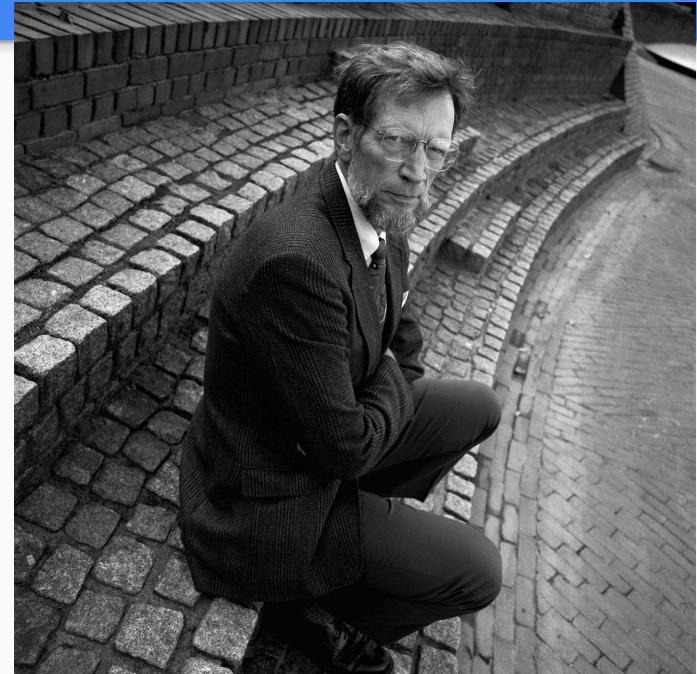
God created things which had free will. That means creatures which can go wrong or right. Some people think they can imagine a creature which was free but had no possibility of going wrong, but I can't. If a thing is free to be good it's also free to be bad. And free will is what has made evil possible.



C.S. Lewis

The Free Will Defense

Now God can create free creatures, but He can't cause or determine them to do only what is right. ... and He can't give these creatures the freedom to perform evil and at the same time prevent them from doing so. As it turned out, sadly enough, some of the free creatures God created went wrong in the exercise of their freedom; this is the source of moral evil.



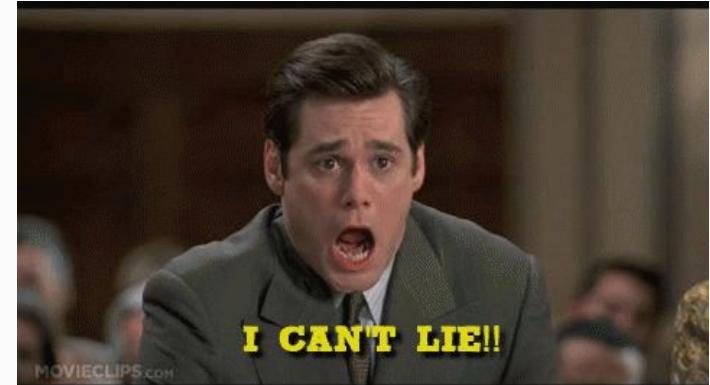
Alvin Plantinga

The logical problem of evil (defended)

1. God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent.
2. An omniscient being has prior knowledge of evil to prevent it.
3. An omnipotent being has the ability to prevent evil.
4. An omnibenevolent being has the desire to prevent evil.
5. There is evil.
6. God values relationships with significantly free people.
7. God could not have created significantly free people *and* eliminated the possibility of evil.

Key Points in the Defense & Challenges

- significantly free (libertarian free will)
 - the view that a person is free with respect to a given action if and only if that person is both free to perform that action and free to refrain from performing that action (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy)
- Could God create significantly free people who never do wrong?



Creating Significantly Free People & the Fall

God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. (Gen 1:31)

- God did not create evil, but did create significantly free people who misused and continue to misuse this gift

The choice: To eat from the tree or not?

- she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate (Gen 3:6)

The consequences:

- I will greatly multiply Your pain (childbirth and working the ground)
- Cursed is the ground, creation groans (Gen 3:17; Rom 8:22)
- to dust you shall return (death)

You also have a choice...

And they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, ...

- 2 Tim 2:26

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, ...

- Deuteronomy 30:19

Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord,

- Proverbs 1:29

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, ...

- 2 Cor 9:7

Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.

- Matt 7:24

... choose this day whom you will serve ...

- Joshua 24:15

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door ...

- Revelation 3:20

whoever believes in him should not perish ...

- John 3:16

Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, ... Rom 13:2

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

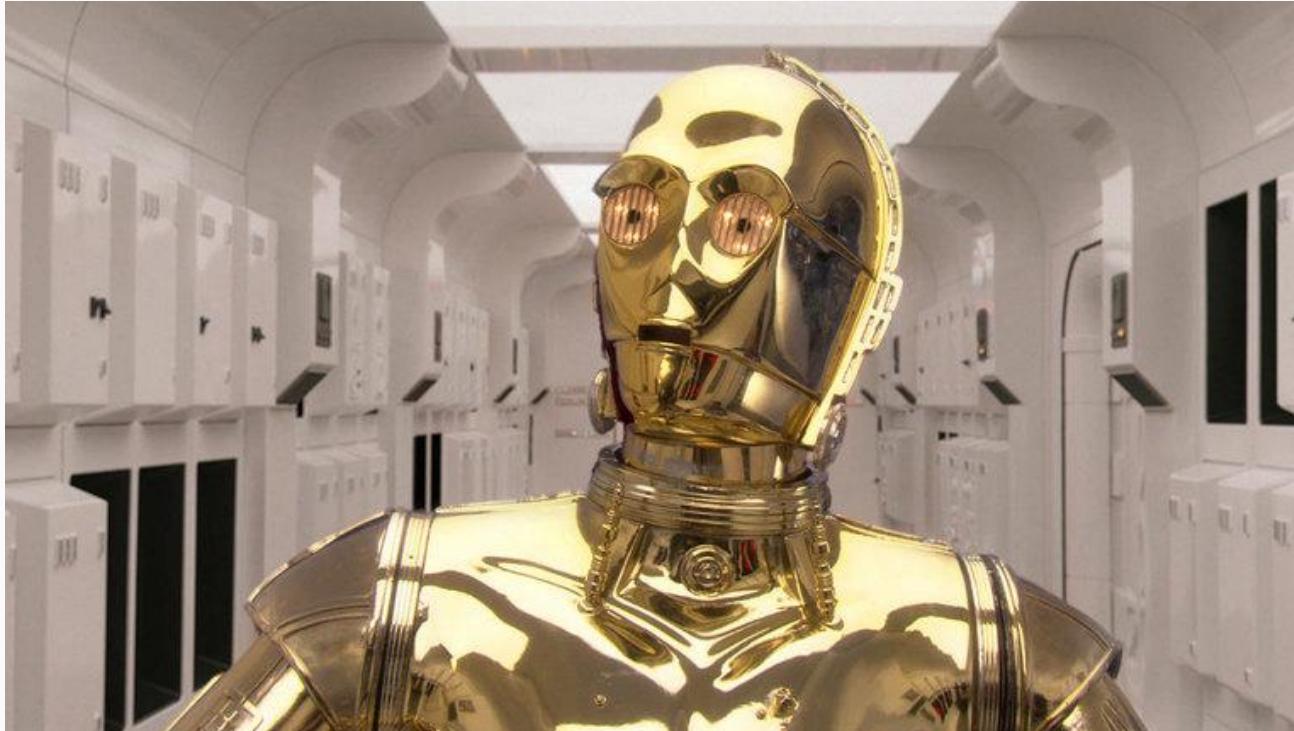
- Matt 11:28

Why makes free will valuable and worth giving to people?



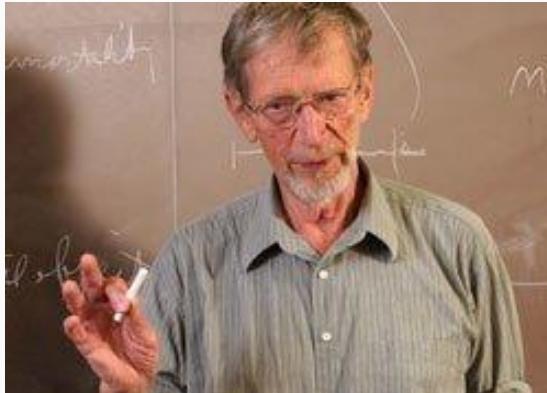
Why makes free will valuable and worth giving to people?

A world of automata -of creatures that worked like machines- would hardly be worth creating. - C.S. Lewis



Why give them free will?

A world containing creatures who are significantly free ... is more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no free creatures at all.



Why, then, did God give them free will?
Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata -of creatures that worked like machines- would hardly be worth creating.

Disciples and Suffering

"If anyone wants to become my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." - Jesus (Mark 8:34)

The Christian should expect to suffer in this life:

- we are exposed to the fallen earth (natural evils)
- we are exposed to the wicked acts of others (moral evils).
- we are exposed to the consequences of our choices.
- we are punished by authorities when we do wrong (Rom 13:1-4; 1 Pet 4:15)
- we are disciplined by God when we do wrong (Heb 12:7-11)
- we have are faith tested (1 Peter 4:12-13; James 1:2-3; Job; Abraham)
- we are called to be like Christ who suffered (1 Peter 2:21; Phil 3:7-11)
- produces incomparable glory in the future (2 Cor 4:17; Rom 8:18)

Screwtape's thoughts on Trials



This indeed is probably one of the Enemy's motives for creating a dangerous world - a world in which moral issues really come to the point.

He sees as well as you do that courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point, which means, at the highest point of reality.

A chastity or honesty or mercy, which yields to danger will be chaste or honest or merciful only on conditions. Pilate was merciful until it became risky.

what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth. - Job



Good News: Christ will Conquer and Restore

In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." - Jesus

Christ came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8)

to overcome the world (John 16:33)

to conquer death (1 Cor 15:54-57)

to restore creation (Rev 21:1-7)

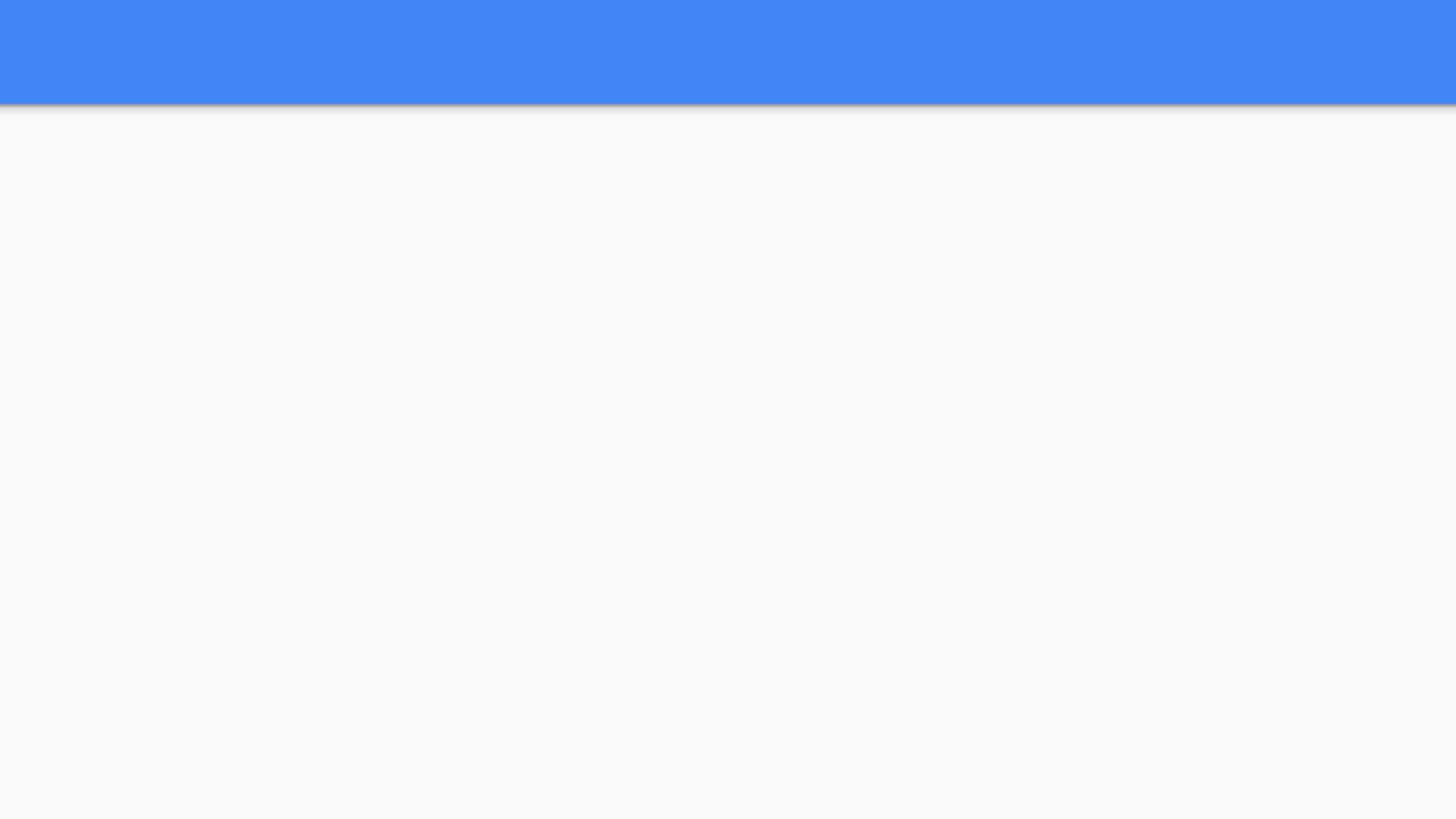
Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth ... And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." ... He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God ...

~ The Gospels tell the story of how cosmic and global evil, ... are met by the sovereign, saving love of Israel's God, YHWH, the creator of the world

What the Gospels offer is not a philosophical explanation of evil, what it is or why it's there, but the story of an *event* in which the living God *deals with it*. Like the exodus from Egypt, or the return from Babylon, only now with fully cosmic reach, God has rescued his people from the dark powers of chaos. The sea monsters have done their worst, and God has vindicated his people and put creation to rights. And he has done so *through* the suffering of Israel's representative, the Messiah.



N.T. Wright



Quick Review

- Christians are DISCIPLES who FOLLOW Jesus.
- Rightly interpreted & applied, the Bible is the FINAL AUTHORITY for a Christian
- People are created in God's IMAGE and thus have DIGNITY & WORTH
- All mankind now lives under the curse of IMPUTED & INHERITED sin.
- Christians worship the One TRIUNE God
- Jesus is fully GOD and fully MAN
- Faith is trusting the FACTS about Christ AND trusting in the PERSON Christ
- Faith is a verb (an act of the will) but it is NOT a WORK