

# The Problem of Evil

Pastor Greg Stiekes, November 11, 2012

“If God really exists, then why is there so much evil and suffering in the world?” This is a common objection to a biblical worldview. People will point to horrifying wickedness, universal suffering, deadly disease, and natural disasters as sufficient evidence that either God does not exist, or if he exists he does not care. What is the believer’s response to such a challenge (1 Pet 3:15)?

*Why does the Problem of Evil matter so much?*

- It is the atheist’s primary \_\_\_\_\_.
- It is a universal \_\_\_\_\_ to God.

## 1. The Argument from Evil

- A God is all-powerful (omnipotent): he can stop evil.
- B God is all-knowing (omniscient): he knows about the evil.
- C God is all-good (omnibenevolent): he does not desire evil.
- D Yet evil exists.
- E Therefore: either A, B, or C is false, or any combination of A, B, or C is false; or, God simply does not exist.

## 2. Making Our Defense

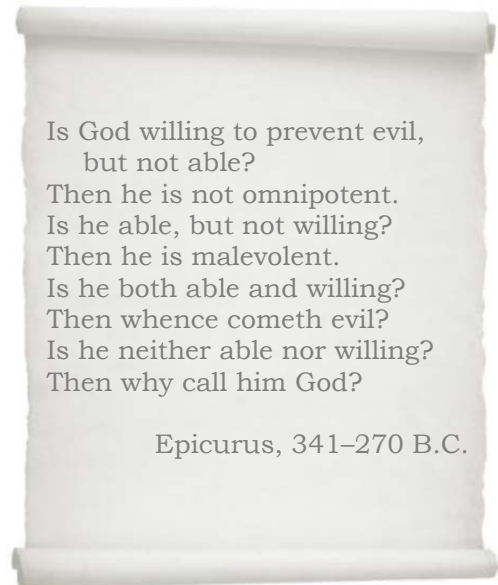
- a. All that is necessary in order for an argument to be “\_\_\_\_\_” is a plausible alternative to the conclusion. An alternative conclusion may look like this:

E2 Therefore: God has a morally sufficient reason for allowing evil.

- b. The person making the argument from evil will object: “But there is no sufficient reason for God to allow evil.” We can make several observations about this rejoinder, the heart of the whole issue:

- (1) This is an assertion which must be \_\_\_\_\_.
- (2) What it means: “*I can’t \_\_\_\_\_ of a good reason, so there is likely \_\_\_\_\_ good reason.*”
- (3) This is known as a \_\_\_\_\_ inference.
- (4) The \_\_\_\_\_ inference is answered in two ways:
  - (a) \_\_\_\_\_ *the inference.*

*We cannot assume that we would very likely see a reason for evil if there were one, unless we have what it takes to discern everything about God. Rather, given the nature of God, it is far less likely that we would be able to discern everything about him (Isa 55:8–9).*



(b) \_\_\_\_\_ *the inference*.

Possible rebuttals:

1. Evil is a result of God's \_\_\_\_\_ on sin.
2. Evil is part of the \_\_\_\_\_ God created.
3. Evil is a necessary \_\_\_\_\_ to good.
4. Evil is a result of \_\_\_\_\_.

### 3. Is the Problem Solved?

The only real solution to the problem of so much evil and suffering in the world is to appeal to the \_\_\_\_\_ of God himself.

- a. God is all-powerful (omnipotent): Psa 115:3; Prov 21:1; Eph 1:11
- b. God is all-good (omnibenevolent): Deut 32:4; Hab 1:13; 1 John 1:5; Rev 15:3–4
- c. God is all-knowing (omniscient): Job 28:24; Psa 139:4; 145:7; Isa 55:9; Heb 4:13
- d. God is wise—both good and evil exist in God's agenda for the cosmos: Isa 45:6–7
- e. God is in control—there is no evil that God does not use unto an ultimate good: Gen 50:20; Rom 9:18; 1 Sam 2:25; 2 Sam 16:10; 1 Kgs 22:21
- f. God is loving—he sent his Son to suffer for us: Isa 53:4–11; Phil 2:5–11.

The believer's response to evil in the world:

We don't always \_\_\_\_\_ God (Rom 11:33)

But we can \_\_\_\_\_ God (Acts 4:24–30)

### Additional Resources:

Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (IVP, 2011).

Daniel Howard-Snyder, "God, Evil, and Suffering," in Michael Murray (ed.), *Reason for the Hope Within* (Eerdmans, 1999). "Theodicy," in Kelly Clark (ed.), *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion*, 2d ed (Broadview Press, 2006), available online: <http://faculty.wvu.edu/howardd/theodicyforclark.pdf>.

Alvin Plantinga, "Suffering and Evil," in *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford, 2000): <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/plantinga/warrant3.toc.html>.