

Sermon Notes

Making (Some) Sense of Suffering

I. The Problem of Evil

“Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able?
Then he is not all-powerful.

Is he able, but not willing? Then he is not all-good.
Is he both able and willing? Then why is there evil?” ~ Epicurus

II. A Logical Response

1. Assumption: If God is all-powerful, God can create any world that he wants.

But not even God can create a world where he *makes* people *freely* do only good.

2. Assumption: If God is all-good, God would prefer a world without evil over a world with evil.

But some greater goods are possible only in a world with pain and suffering.

III. (Some) Lessons Learned

1. Pain and suffering as an _____
vs. an _____

2. Pain and suffering is never _____.

- A. The reasons for our pain and suffering are often discernable only in retrospect.
- B. We might not ever know what those reasons are for our pain and suffering.
- C. Pain and suffering allows for greater goods that would otherwise not be possible.

“No words can express how much the world owes to sorrow. Most of the Psalms were born in the wilderness. Most of the Epistles were written in a prison. The greatest thoughts of the greatest thinkers have all passed through fire. The greatest poets have ‘learned in suffering what they taught in song.’ Take comfort! When God is about to make pre-eminent use of a person, He puts them in the fire.”

~George MacDonald

3. Your pain and suffering is *not* special divine _____ for sin.

A. Natural consequences vs. special divine punishment

B. Can we assume that pain and suffering are the result of divine displeasure?

Is this what we learn from the suffering of Job? No! (Job 1:1)

Is this what Paul gleans from all his suffering? No!
(2 Corinthians 1:8-14)

Is this what Jesus says when asked about the suffering of others? No! (John 9:1-3; Luke 13:1-5)

Is this what we learn from the suffering of Jesus himself?
No! No! No!

Is this what happened to Ananias and Sapphira?
It's complicated (Acts 5:1-10)

C. Christian, the punishment due for your sin was borne by Jesus on the cross.

“Do what God’s teaching says; when you only listen and do nothing, you are fooling yourselves.” - James 1:22 (NCV)