

# Systematic Theology

A study of the major doctrines of Scripture

TOPIC 2 – THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

LESSON 50 – THE TRINITY (PART 7): GOD THE FATHER - THEODICY

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# The Problem of Evil

- ▶ One of the most persistent arguments against the existence of God (or God as the Bible defines Him) is based on the existence of physical and moral evil in the world. Does God cause the evil actions that people commit? If God is real, perfectly good, and omnipotent, then how can evil exist?
- ▶ Premise 1: If God is all-powerful, He could prevent evil.
- ▶ Premise 2: If God is all-good, He would desire to prevent evil.
- ▶ Premise 3: Evil exists.
- ▶ Therefore: There is no all-powerful, all-good God.

- MacArthur, pg. 222

# The Problem of Evil

- ▶ The problem of evil includes physical, or natural evil (disasters, illness, pain, death) and moral evil (sin).
- ▶ The Christian response to the problem of evil is called “Theodicy”, which mean “justification for God.” It is a vindication of God’s justice against the charge that the presence of evil in creation shows Him to be unjust, weak, or non-existent.
- ▶ Theodicy declares that God is all powerful and all good even though this might not seem to be the case due to the existence of evil in creation.

# The Problem of Evil

- ▶ The only proper theodicy comes from the Bible as it alone is our infallible and sufficient rule and provides a more than adequate defense as God reveals Himself to us as He is in His Word.
- ▶ Scripture never assumes that God must explain His actions to His creatures but asserts that He alone is good and has the right to be trusted.
- ▶ In Genesis 3 God does not explain the origin of evil in Satan or how Adam and Eve could sin in a perfect world. Adam blamed God, in fact, but God did not defend Himself, but He immediately condemned Adam.

# The Problem of Evil

- ▶ Exodus 33:19, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”
- ▶ God will not submit to man’s judgment but will show grace and mercy to whomever He wills without needing to explain His actions.
- ▶ In Job 38-41, after Job’s friends have blamed him for being the cause of his suffering, and after Job appeals to God, God asks the questions, asserting that man is incapable of understanding God’s workings in distributing good and evil. God never explains why Job had to suffer. Job wanted to question God but was questioned by God.

# The Problem of Evil

- ▶ In the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, the master does not defend himself against the charge of unfairness but reverses the charges against the accusers, demonstrating God's divine sovereignty.
- ▶ Matthew 20:1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2 Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4 and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. 5 Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. 6 And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' 7 They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.'

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- ▶ Matthew 20:8 “So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.’ 9 And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. 10 But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. 11 And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, 12 saying, ‘These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.’ 13 But he answered one of them and said, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14 Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. 15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?’ 16 So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.”

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- ▶ In Romans 3, Paul does not ask questions about God's fairness but rather rebukes such questions by asserting God's right as sovereign Lord.
- ▶ Roman 3:5 But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.) 6 Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world?
- ▶ Romans 9 also demonstrates that questioning, or talking back to God, demonstrates disobedience and dishonor. God is not obligated to explain His actions in order to satisfy human questions.

- MacArthur, pg. 223



# The Problem of Evil

- ▶ A proper Biblical theodicy recognizes God's right to do as He pleases, to not explain Himself to sinners, to condemn sin and sinners in the world, and to call sinners to accept Him as the only true remedy for evil.
- ▶ God shows us that in the past He has resolved suffering by sending grace and restoration.
- ▶ God shows us that in the present He is able to use evil to fulfill His purposes for good.
- ▶ God shows us that in the future He will be fully vindicated and believers will be fully delivered from evil and its effects.

- MacArthur, pg. 224

# The Problem of Evil

- ▶ Jesus solves the problem of evil by harmonizing divine justice and mercy. By His atoning death, He is the divine theodicy – vindicating both divine justice and mercy at the cross. Grace reigns through righteousness which is revealed by the gospel of grace.
- ▶ Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.
- ▶ Romans 5:20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, 21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

# The Problem of Evil

- ▶ When properly defined, human free will and divine determinism are complementary ideas. It is possible to accept both without being logically inconsistent. One's will is free within the boundaries of one's own nature. Since fallen humans are depraved and cannot obey God, fallen humans are free only to sin.
- ▶ 1. God predetermines all events (Eph. 1:11)
- ▶ 2. The fall resulted in physical difficulties and catastrophes (Isa. 45:7; Rom. 8:20-22).
- ▶ 3. God predetermines sin but makes man accountable for his sin (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; 14:16).

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- ▶ 4. God hardens sinners in sin (Rom. 9:18).
- ▶ 5. God never tempts people to sin (James 1:13).
- ▶ 6. God is never blamed in Scripture for sin or portrayed as enjoying the sin He permits (Psa. 5:4).
- ▶ 7. God never coerces man to sin but ordains that man sin freely and thus be culpable (James 1:14-15).
- ▶ 8. God controls people's sin, working mysteriously through secondary causes (2 Sam. 24:1, 10; 1 Chron. 21:1).
- ▶ 9. God is glorified in His justice when He causes calamities and judges sin (Isa. 45:5-7; Ezek. 28:22; John 9:2-5).
- ▶ 10. God has graciously provided salvation from sin for those who believe in Christ (Rom. 3:24-26).

- MacArthur, pg. 225

# The Problem of Evil

- ▶ God uses all things to fulfill His purposes and even uses evil for His glory and for our good.
- ▶ God never does evil, and is never to be blamed for evil.
- ▶ God rightfully blames and judges moral creatures for the evil that they do.
- ▶ Evil is real, not an illusion, and we should never do evil, for it will always harm us and others.
- ▶ Evil is a condition, not a created thing!

# The Solution for Evil

- ▶ Without the standard of God's Word we cannot even define or determine what is and what is not evil. It is God Himself who alone is good and serves as the standard of what is right and what is wrong.
- ▶ Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
- ▶ Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- ▶ Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- ▶ Romans 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation....13 For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."