

I. Session 91: Problem of Evil and What We Deserve

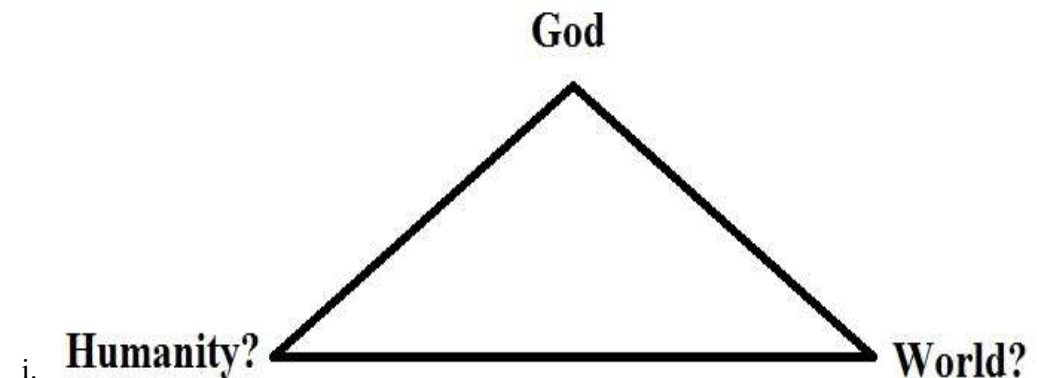
a. Review:

- i. In the first session we laid the foundation for our series discussing the problem by first reviewing the attributes of God that we cannot minimize or deny.
- ii. In the second session we discussed the problem of evil in terms of the fact that the Bible teaches all evil will come to an end one day.

b. Purpose: In this session we shall discuss the issue of what the Bible says we as sinners deserve given that some form of the problem of evil assumes that we deserve good.

c. In thinking about the problem of evil it is helpful to think of the different referents of what people assumed are good and their relationships with one another

Goodness?



- i. **Humanity?**
- ii. How are some of the ways they relate to one another?
 1. Christians would say the source of goodness is God.
 2. God as Creator and Lord of the world would mean that we would see some things that are good in this world.
 3. God originally created man in the beginning to be “very good” (**Genesis 1:31**).
- iii. How they relate to the problem of evil
 1. Sometimes one of the assumption when it comes to the problem of evil is the dilemma in which people assume they are good.
 2. From the premise that we are good the corollary is that if God is good then we deserve things that are good both within ourselves (happiness, good health, etc) and things that are good found in the world (relationship, etc).
 3. But there are evil in this world, both moral evil (sin) and so called natural evil (tornadoes, sickness, etc).
 4. Some then therefore question God’s goodness.
 5. However when that happens sometimes the assumption of humanity’s goodness is taken for granted.
- d. An illustration on why the question of human goodness are important concerning what we do and do not deserve
 - i. Scenario 1: A kid gets his test back with no errors that was noted by the teacher. Yet the teacher arbitrarily gives him a grade of 70 percent. The student would see that there is a problem of justice because he did not **deserve** to get what he was given.
 - ii. Scenario 2: A kid goes online to see the result of his test score. He failed his exam because he cheated. As a result certain consequences follows (removal

from sports team, grounded by parents, dis-enrolled from the school's honor society, etc). He protests his grades saying he does not **deserve** it. But after receiving back his work and a formal parents-teacher conference for any fair-minded individual the conclusion would be that he did **deserve** the grade he had and while we can be sympathetic with the student's consequences yet it is not the problem of justice as the student made it out to be.

- iii. Note how the issue of what we deserve changes how we see the problem of injustice. Likewise any discussion of the problem of evil must account for what does the Bible have to say what we as humans deserve.
- e. What does the Bible teach about what human sinners deserve?
 - i. Foundational issues
 1. The Bible teaches that all humans are sinners
 - a. *"Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins."* (**Ecclesiastes 7:20**)
 - b. *"When they sin against You (for there is no man who does not sin) and You are angry with them and deliver them to an enemy, so that they take them away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near;"* (**1 Kings 8:46**)
 - i. Here the context is that these are the words of Solomon in praying to God as the Ark was taken to the Temple.
 - ii. Here Solomon acknowledges to God that it is an issue of "when" Israel, being God's people would "sin against You."
 - iii. Solomon explains the basis of his reasoning: *"(for there is no man who does not sin"*
 - c. *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"* (**Romans 3:23**)
 2. The Bible teaches that humans are sinners from the beginning of human life
 - a. *"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me."* (**Psalms 51:5**)
 - b. *"The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth."* (**Psalms 58:3**)
 - c. We are already by nature sinful: *"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."* (**Ephesians 2:1-3**)
 3. Of course because of our sins God should judge us.
 - ii. *"then it shall be if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall then make him lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of stripes according to his guilt."* (**Deuteronomy 25:2**)
 1. First verse in the NASB to mention the word "deserve."
 2. In the context this is a Mosaic Civil Law for Israel's society.
 3. Note here the idea of what someone deserve is negative: it gives us a scenario in which *"the wicked man deserves to be beaten."*
 - iii. *"Woe to the wicked! It will go badly with him, For what he deserves will be done to him."* (**Isaiah 3:11**)

1. In the context God is speaking out against Jerusalem and Judah for their sins.
 2. Here the Prophet Isaiah is talking about "*the wicked.*"
 3. Here he states that in regards to the wicked, "*what he deserves will be done to him.*"
 4. This is the reason why that in regards to the wicked Isaiah declared "*It will go badly with him.*"
- iv. "*And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.*" (Luke 23:41)
1. In the context this is one of the two thieves hanging on the cross.
 2. Note that this repentant sinner acknowledges that he and the other thief "*are receiving what we deserve for our deeds.*"
 3. Here yet again we see the use of the verb "deserve" in the Bible shows what we deserve is not a good thing.
 4. Notice here the admission that Christ did not deserve to be on the cross.
- v. "*How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?*" (Hebrews 10:29)
1. Here the writer of Hebrew tells the readers that there are consequences with rejecting Jesus Christ.
 2. The writer ask rhetorically about how one much who consciously reject Christ "*will deserve*" "*much severer punishment.*"
 3. Again we see the negative implications of what we deserve being assumed with clarity that those who reject Christ would even deserve much more severe consequences.
- vi. "*for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it.*" (Revelation 16:6)
- f. Implications towards the problem of evil and also implications for life
- i. While we do not deserve anything good from God we must make sure we do not become like Job's friends and assume that always everytime we suffer it is because of God's punishment.
 - ii. At the same time when we or others wrestle with the problem with evil we must ask if there are any hidden assumption that we deserve anything good from the Lord.
 - iii. Putting things in perspective in light of the fact that we do not deserve anything good from God, we must have the view that even temporal suffering is a much more merciful fate than eternal torment in Hell for there is always still the opportunity to repent this side of eternity and the full wrath of God has not been poured out.
 - iv. Are there anything recently you assumed you deserve but you have realized you don't deserve?