



A P O L O G E T I C S

206

Week 6

# Larger Framework

Problems of the Biblical Position

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## Problems of the Biblical Position

Element U is to help give you answers, but remember that Jesus is bigger than this class and our attempts at answers.

### Miracles contradict science (Larger Framework)

The whole world exists and functions by Jesus' grace and power. As science puts forth theories as facts, remember that God has all ready figured it all out because, if He didn't, those scientists wouldn't even be here to try and tinker with things they don't understand.

When someone says, "miracles contradict science," what should your answer be? Of course they do, if they didn't, they wouldn't be a miracle!

When we approach the Bible by taking the miraculous out, then we don't need the miraculous God. God no longer becomes in control, only nature. In the book of Jonah the biggest miracle is not the whale (big fish), it is that over 100,000 bloodthirsty Ninevites turn to the one true God.

We are to approach the scriptures from a standpoint of a God who is sovereign and in control.

### The Problem of Pain: (Larger Framework)

- God is All Good
- God is All Powerful (omnipotent)
- Evil Exists

**Conclusion – Either God isn't all Good or He isn't all powerful or He doesn't exist.**

#### What is evil?

- Moral evil is sin.
- Natural evil is what causes suffering and unpleasantness.

John Owen, *"If we would talk less and pray more about them, things would be better than they are in the world: at least, we should be better enabled to bear them."*

#### Why doesn't God eradicate it?

**Bad Answers to it** - You will hear Christians constantly trying to make excuses for God to let Him off the hook, so much so that they would even change His nature from what the scripture clearly prescribes that it is. Bad answers are those that say "its not God's fault. He would have stopped it but He wasn't able to do so."

1. **Evil is not real.** Some people get around evil by simply denying its existence.
2. **God is not all-powerful. God is weak and unable to prevent them.**
  - Psalm 115:3 *Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases. Isaiah 55:11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

**3. This is the best possible world, and evil is necessary for its perfection.**

**4. Evil is a result of peoples' free will, so God is not accountable for evil.**

This is the most common defense...the Free will defense.

### **2 mains views on Free Will –**

**Libertarian free will** - means that our choices are free from the determination or constraints of human nature and free from any predetermination by God. "Free will theists" hold that *libertarian freedom* is essential for moral responsibility, for if our choice is determined or caused by anything, including our own desires, it cannot properly be called a free choice.

**Compatibilist Freedom** – means a freedom that is consistent with God sovereignty.

*Genesis 50:20 , you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good Acts 2:23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.*

### **John Calvin :**

*"... the Lord had declared that 'everything that he had made ... was exceedingly good' [Genesis 1:31]. Whence, then comes this wickedness to man, that he should fall away from his God? Lest we should think it comes from creation, God had put His stamp of approval on what had come forth from himself. By his own evil intention, then, man corrupted the pure nature he had received from the Lord; and by his fall drew all his posterity with him into destruction. Accordingly, we should contemplate the evident cause of condemnation in the corrupt nature of humanity-which is closer to us-rather than seek a hidden and utterly incomprehensible cause in God's predestination. [Institutes, 3:23:8]"*

**5. Evil is necessary for people to mature.** We need evil to build character.

**6. God is the indirect (not direct) cause of evil, so He is not accountable for evil.**

**7. God is above the law, so He can do what seems evil to other people.** This what is called *Ex Lex* (Latin for above the law).

**8. Non-Christians have no right to question whether God is both all-powerful and all good.**

### **What does a biblical approach to the logical problem of evil include?**

**1. Bad things do not happen to good people; good and bad things happen to bad people.**

**2. The problem of evil is an argument for God, not against Him.** Christians must account for the problem of evil, but atheists must account for the problems of both good and evil.

**3. God is not obligated to explain the problem of evil to anyone.** Faith, by definition, requires trust when one does not have all the answers.

**4. God (not our sense of justice) is the standard for what He does.** When God deals with people, He is always fair (justice), and He does favors (grace).

**5. God ordains and is sovereign over evil, but He cannot be blamed for it.**

- "Does disaster come to a city, unless the Lord has done it?" (Amos 3:6).
- "I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the Lord, who does all these things" (Isaiah 45:7).

**6. The logical problem of evil (including providence) involves mystery, requiring that Christians maintain doctrinal tensions in biblical proportion.** Some Bible teachings like the Trinity and the nature of Christ's person involve tensions (fully God, fully man). They are mutually compatible, not contradictory.

**7. God uses evil for a greater good.** His ultimate design is to glorify Himself, and all things work towards that end.

**8. There was no problem of evil before the fall, nor will there be one in the eternal state.**

**9. God uses natural evil to illustrate how horrendous moral evil really is, and the right response is repentance.**

**10. The most significant problem of evil is the cross.** The most outrageous evil in human history is the murder of Jesus. How can these three statements all be true? (1) God is holy and just; (2) humans are sinners who offend God's holiness and deserve His just wrath; and (3) God forgives and justifies sinners through faith in Jesus. God vindicated Himself in the cross of Christ

- *Romans 3:23-26 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.)*

#### **What does a biblical approach to the emotional problem of evil include?**

1) People who are suffering are typically wrestling primarily with the *emotional problem of evil* (not the logical one).

2) People initially react to suffering poorly.

3) Don't say and do certain things to people who are suffering.

- a. "This must be happening to you because you committed some great sin."
- b. Don't focus on the loss of things instead of people.
- c. Don't speculate about what unforeseen problems this suffering may be sparing them.
- d. Don't assume that they are seeking an answer to the question "Why?"
- e. When people ask "Why?," don't assume that they are looking for a long, sophisticated answer.

4) Say and do certain things to people who are suffering.

- a. Show them that you really do care by spending time with them, listening to them, and tangibly demonstrating love over the long haul.
- b. Share specific reasons for hope.
- c. Help them focus on someone else's needs.
- d. False guilt often accompanies suffering, "Jesus died to take our guilt."
- e. Help them know God better.
- f. Pray with and for them because only God can provide sufficient comfort.

## Why doesn't God make Himself more known? People who have never heard of Jesus? (Larger Framework)

**Natural Theology** is the process of trying to show God exists without appealing to Biblical Revelation. Simply to nature and reason.

- 1) The origin of the universe (out of nothing),
- 2) the fine tuning of life,
- 3) objectively existing moral values,
- 4) the resurrection of Jesus from the Dead,
- 5) the experience of God in the lives of people.

Paul Moser, *"it makes little difference to God whether people believe that He exists. Rather, what God is interested in is building a personal, loving, saving relationship with us."*

## If God cares, why are some consigned to hell? (Larger Framework)

We dislike the notion of Hell and because we dislike it we try to judge whether it is right or wrong to do based on how we feel about it.

JP Moreland says that instead we should look at it more from the perspective of *"whether Hell is morally just and morally right state of affairs, not whether we like the concept or not."*

God is the most generous, loving, wonderful, joy filled, grace giving being in the universe, but God is also compassionate, just, moral, and pure. What God does is not based upon modern American sentimentality of tolerance and "love" as we define it.

The Bible is clear that even our most righteous acts are as filthy rags in God's sight.

- *Isaiah 64:6 We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.* - that was said of God's chosen people, not the pagans.
- God's desires are always holy and perfect.
- Our desires are always sinful and selfish.

Only if the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us can we enter into God's legal pardon (justification) that brings salvation.

Hell and the Cross are allies.

# If Jesus is the Chief Shepherd of church why is it so brutal and hypocritical? (Larger Framework)

1) Just because people don't live up to a message does not mean the message itself is wrong.

Stephen Nordbye writes, "At a recent annual meeting of the American Heart Association in Atlanta, 300,000 doctors and researchers came together to discuss the importance of low-fat diets in keeping our hearts healthy. But during meal times, they consumed fat-filled fast food, bacon cheeseburgers and chili fries, at the same artery-clogging high rate as people from any other conventions would. One cardiologist was asked, 'Aren't you concerned that your bad eating habits will be a bad example?' He replied, 'Not me. I took my nametag off.'"

2) Every belief system, any ideology or movement, will attract people who do not live up to it.

Dallas Willard "Whatever our position in life, if our lives and works are to be of the kingdom of God, we must not have human approval as a primary or even major aim. We must lovingly allow people to think whatever they will."

## Additional Resources

<http://www.reasonablefaith.org/the-new-atheism-and-five-arguments-for-god>

John Feinberg - [Where Is God? A Personal Story of Finding God in Grief and Suffering](#)

John Frame - [Apologetics](#)

D. A. Carson - [How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil](#)

Bruce A. Ware - [God's Greater Glory](#)

<http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/confronting-the-problem-s-of-evil>

<http://carm.org/open-theism-and-libertarian-free-will>

Paul Moser - [The Elusive God](#)

Paul Copen - [Is God a Moral Monster?](#)

Christopher Wright - [The God I Don't Understand](#)

Paul Copan - [When God Goes To Starbucks](#)

# Objections to Libertarian Free Will

1) **Causality** - If causes are understood as conditions prior to an effect that guarantee an effect, and all events have causes, then it follows that all events were preceded by conditions that guaranteed those events. But this is the same as saying all events are determined. Since the choices of humans are events, it follows that the choices of humans are determined.

2) **Responsibility** - Rather than salvage human responsibility, some maintain that libertarian freedom destroys it. If our choices have no causes, in what sense are they our choices? Is it any more agreeable to reason to hold humans responsible for choices they didn't cause than to hold them responsible for choices that were caused and thus determined?

3) **God's Freedom** - Some have maintained libertarian freedom on the basis that all things done of necessity are not worthy of praise or blame. But what are we to think of God's actions? We believe that God does good, and that God cannot do evil. Does God's moral inability to do evil make His good actions unpraiseworthy? If God must do good, is He then unpraiseworthy? Some have said that God must do good because God's nature determines His choices. God is still free, some say, because God can act in accordance with His choices, but God's choices are determined by His nature. If God's choices are determined, and God is worthy of praise, this is a clear case, some say, of actions that are determined and thus necessary while also being morally praiseworthy.

There are places in the NT where you would expect Paul to easily argue for libertarian freedom and he doesn't. Romans 9 Paul is sad for his countrymen and their denial of Jesus, you would expect Paul to say *"unfortunately they have free will and its all their fault."* In 9:10 he talks about God's choice of Jacob over Esau...then in 9:14-19 *What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it depends not on vhuman will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?"* If anyone could have given a perfect opportunity for a freewill defense, it would have been right there.