

# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## “tares among the wheat”

### Key question

If God is great and good why is their evil in the world?

### Key text

### Matthew 13:24-30

“24 He presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field 25 But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. 26 But when the wheat sprang up and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. 27 And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ 28 And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ And the slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ 29 But he said, ‘No; lest while you are gathering up the tares, you may root up the wheat with them. 30 Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”

### Key Definition

### Evil

Evil is the fruit of sin - active or passive rebellion against God. It is antithetical to the character of God as well as the values of the Kingdom of God, and destructive to those who are made in God’s image. Evil will ultimately be overcome by the plan and power of God.

### Introduction

1. When Thomas Aquinas wrote his *Summa*, he found only two serious arguments against the existence of God. One was the problem of evil. The other was the apparent adequacy of the natural and human science to account for all that we experience without God—which does *not* conclude "therefore there is no God" but only "therefore it is not necessary to suppose that there is a God."
2. David Hume put the problem of suffering succinctly when he wrote of God:
  - a. Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then is He not impotent? God is weak.

- b. Is God able, but not willing? Then is He not malevolent? God is wicked.
- c. Is God both willing and able? Then why is there evil? God is stupid or we are stupid.

NOTE: The philosophers and theologians call this the “problem of theodicy.” The term “theodicy” comes from the combination of two Greek words (viz., *theos* = God, and *dike* = justice) that literally mean the “justification of God.” The problem is often stated like this: “*You say God is both omnipotent and perfectly good. If so, there ought not to be any evil in the world, since your God would be both able and willing to prevent it. But there is evil in the world; so either there is no God, or he is not omnipotent, or he is not perfectly good*” (Brian Hebblethwaite, *Evil, Suffering and Religion*, p. 60).

- 3. Two types of evil:
  - a. **Natural evil** does not involve the human will or action but is the result of the forces of nature – flood, lightning, earthquake, tornado, etc.
  - b. **Moral evil** related to the choices and actions of free moral agents (people). War is an example.
 

NOTE: Evil and suffering are not the same. Evil may cause suffering but all suffering is not evil.
- 4. Two approaches to the problem of evil.
  - a. **Pastoral** - How do I maintain a worshipful relationship with God when he has allowed me to be hurt?
  - b. **Philosophical** - How can I make sense of a God who is great and good along side evil that is real?
  - c. C.S Lewis suggests that this world is the only kind of world whereby God could glorify Himself fully.

A. **Understandings of evil and corresponding views of salvation.**

- 1. Various religious and philosophical perspectives have explained evil in different ways.
  - a. **Paganism** (the notion that God or the gods is or are not all powerful) is expressed in “process theology,” which claims that god is in process, is still evolving, and yet unable to conquer all evil. Pop psychology, which makes every person a god, is a form of paganism.
  - b. **Pantheism** (*Pan-theism* means that everything is god and god is everything) declares that God is equally present in both good and evil. He has a dark side, like the Force in *Star Wars*. Vishnu the Creator and Shiva the Destroyer are equal manifestations of Brahman, "the One without a second" in Hinduism. Transposed into biblical terms, this means that Satan is not God’s enemy but half of God himself.
  - c. **Biblical** description of God (Judeo-Christian-Muslim theism) See below.
  - d. **Atheism** dismisses the existence of God in favor of a randomly evolving universe that has its self-preservation as it’s only meaning and purpose. In this faith system, evil is a social construct that in reality is simply nature’s way of preserving one option over against others.
- 2. The root of evil will dictate the nature of salvation or deliverance from evil.

The root of evil	The sphere of influence	The nature of salvation	Religious system
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Passions	The cosmos	Reason	Stoicism
Lack of joy	The passions	Hedonism	Epicureanism
Death	Finiteness	Immortality	Hellenism
Pain	Feelings	Nirvana	Buddhism
Ignorance	The intellect	Philosophy	Platonism
Private property	Class alienation	Revolution	Marxism
Repression	Neurosis	Psychoanalysis	Freudianism
Sin	The will	Forgiveness	Judeo-Christian tradition

3. For a good discussion of the various options in the problem of suffering I suggest Allan Turner's essay *The Problem of Suffering* Nov.20, 1998 <http://allanturner.com/ss10.html>

**B. Some inadequate responses:**

1. **“We are trying to justify a God who needs no justification.”**
  - a. We are trying to justify what we say about God, that He is all-powerful and perfectly good. We are trying to show how this can be true even though there is suffering in the world.
  - b. Honest inquiry is a necessary part of good discernment. When religious claims seem to exist in contradiction with each other they should be examined.
2. **“The problem just shows that human reason is totally inadequate for understanding the things of God.”**
  - a. It is true that human reason is limited and that we must approach spiritual matters with spiritual insight.
  - b. But if reason is totally inadequate and spiritual discernment bypasses it, then we can hold no justifiable beliefs about God. We cannot talk about God in any reasonable way if this is true.
3. **“God’s will is radically free. He is bound by no external moral principles. He can do whatever He wants to do. “Good” just means “whatever God does” or “that which is in accordance with the will of God.””**
  - a. It is true that God’s perspective on any issue may be much deeper and broader than ours. This may leave us with the perception that God’s good plan in the long run is not good in the short term.
  - b. But if this is true then the statement “God is good” is completely uninformative. It says only that God does whatever He does. Goodness must have meaning apart from the decrees of God if we are to say that God is good.
4. **“There is much more good in the world than there is suffering and evil. There is enough good to show that the world was created by a good God.”**
  - a. It is true that both good and evil exist. Evil does not characterize all of life.
  - b. The problem is why a perfect God would allow ANY evil in the world. Christians claim not just that God is good and powerful, but that He is perfect in these respects.
5. **“There could be no good, or appreciation for good without evil.”**

- a. There are many virtues that are appreciated because they exist in the context of suffering and evil – faith, grace, hope, love, courage, etc. The existence of these virtues does not demand a contrasting context but the **full human appreciation** of these virtues in this age may be aided by a contrasting context.
  - b. It may be a psychological truth that contrast enhances experience, but if God were perfectly loving, why did he not create us to appreciate good without the necessity of suffering? Will there be evil in heaven so that we can know the good?
6. **“God is limited in power; so all evil exists against His will.”**
- a. It is true that God chooses to limit the use of His power in many circumstances.
  - b. This attempt to save God’s goodness by giving up His power seems to ignore a large part of the Scriptural record and a nearly universal Christian conviction that God is capable of intervening in His Creation even to the extent of resurrecting the dead.
7. **“God includes evil as a necessary part of His will.”**
- a. God certainly can and has used evil for good on many occasions. Some say God **had to** include evil in the world as a **necessary** contrast to all the good in His creation, so that the good could be appreciated.
  - b. Others believe that moral perfection must be developed. It cannot be created *ex nihilo*. But since such growth is impossible apart from the experience of evil, it was therefore necessary for God to include evil in the world by His own decision and purpose.
  - c. The problem with this view is that it comes close to, if not insisting upon, the origination of evil and the orchestration of evil by God. While there is no question that God can use evil for good, it is problematic that God would require evil and be the ultimate source of evil.

C. **Themes that form a solution:**

1. **Evil is a necessary accompaniment of the creation of humankind.**
  - a. **Moral choices** are not possible without evil being an option.
  - b. We would not be human without the option of moral choice.
  - c. **Love** demands freedom, which leads to the possibility of evil and the pain that results.
  - d. Pain is God’s **visual aid** reminding us of our spiritual condition. It has been said that suffering and death are God’s universal teachers. They are a constant reminder of our alienation from God and each other in this age.
  - e. Pain is also an **opportunity** to display certain attributes of God like grace, courage, faith, compassion, etc.
2. **We must reevaluate what constitutes good and evil.**
  - a. It is not the short-range comfort but the long-range welfare of all humanity as determined by the superior knowledge and wisdom of God that is at stake. It is the long-range perspective that must be kept in view. How important will this seem to me a year from now? five years? a million years?
  - b. “We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.” Rom.8:28 This means that there are noble purposes that may include ennobling and painful details or steps. We may not always be aware of how and for what purpose suffering works.
  - c. “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” Rom.8:18 (II Cor.4:17, Heb.2:12, I Pet.1:6-7)

- d. What appears to be evil for us may be a part of the overall good of mankind. As Augustine noted, “God would not allow any evil to exist unless out of it he could draw a greater good. This is part of the wisdom and goodness of God.”
3. **Evil in general is a result of sin in general.** The Biblical narrative describes Adam’s sin as having a pervasive effect on all creation. Individual sins are compounded in culture with the effect that systemic evil is formed.
  4. **Specific Evil can be the result of specific sins.** Evil people exist and commit acts of evil that may have dramatic effects on others. For example, a selfish lie can destroy an other person’s character.
  5. **God as the victim of evil in that His Son was crucified.** God’s empathy goes to the extreme of sharing our shame and guilt in His Son’s crucifixion.
  6. **The life hereafter promises justice.** The Biblical drama of redemption does not end with us, and this age. It is complete only at the coming of Christ, the judgment of God, and the New Heaven and Earth.
  7. **God’s chosen narrative is His Creation, Plan, and Providence.** Of all the plans that God could have created, this is the one that we have. Many have concluded that our world must be the best possible environment to showcase all of what God wants to reveal about Himself. This narrative 1) is revealed in the Scriptures, 2) pictures a linear view of history with a beginning and end, 3) indicates that God’s Created beings are given freedom of choice as well as the knowledge of both good and evil.
  8. **Suffering argues for the existence of God.** Peter Kreeft (professor of philosophy at Boston College and the author of many books) makes the following observations in his article “*The Problem of Suffering Reconsidered*”. [www.catholic.com/thisrock/2002/2003fea1.asp](http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/2002/2003fea1.asp)
    - a. *“One way is by reflecting on not evil itself but our knowledge of evil. How is it that we can judge a thing to be evil? Unless such judgments are all meaningless or false—unless the terrorist massacre of over three thousand innocent civilians isn’t really evil, and we are merely “judgmental” when we claim that it is—we must have some true knowledge of what is really evil. But this means that we must also have some true knowledge of what is really good. Without knowledge of the standard we cannot judge by that standard.*  
*But the relative goods we know are measured by the standard of the absolute good. Just as eleven is two integers closer to infinity than nine, a saint is closer to ontological perfection than a worm. But nothing in the created world is absolute goodness. Therefore, unless we discount, subjectivize, or relativize all our judgments of good and evil—which is exactly the move the secularist makes to avoid this checkmate—there must be a God.*
    - b. *Another way of using evil to prove God is by noting that we protest evil. We hate evil, even when our pseudo-Christian ideologies tell us to hate nothing. Innately and inescapably, we desire good—all good—and fear evil—all evil. To fear evil is to desire good. But every innate, natural desire corresponds to a real object. We may desire unreal objects, like seeing the Land of Oz or being Superman or witnessing the Red Sox win game seven of a World Series, but we do not desire them innately and thus universally. We do desire food, drink, sleep, sex, knowledge, beauty, and companionship innately and universally, and all these things exist. We also desire goodness—all kinds of goodness—innately and universally. But we desire goodness without limit. We are not wholly satisfied with finite goodness. We have a lover’s quarrel with the world, no matter how*

*good or beautiful we find the world. In fact, this dissatisfaction with the world arises in us most poignantly when we experience the most, not the least, goodness in this world.*

*From these two premises that come from our own experience—that every innate desire corresponds to a real object and that we have an innate desire for unlimited good—we logically conclude that infinite goodness exists. But infinite goodness is another term for God. Only God is infinitely good. Therefore God exists.*

- c. *There is one more argument from evil to God. It is quite eccentric, but it may be a valid argument. (I am not sure.) Let us assume there is no God. If there is no God, there is no Creator. If there is no Creator, there is no act of creation. If there is no act of creation, then the universe, or the sum total of all matter and energy, was not created. If the universe was not created, it was always here. There was no first moment. However many cycles of change, or catastrophic changes, or relatively big bangs there may have been, there was never any Big Bang, no absolutely first event. So there has already been infinite time. If we could take a time machine and journey into the past—which we probably cannot, even in principle, ever do physically, but which we can certainly do mentally—we would never come to an end (i.e., an absolute beginning).*

*So far, the argument seems logical. But we now add a premise that, while it may be unnecessary, is nevertheless a premise most atheists admit: namely, cosmic evolution. By this I mean not just the evolution of species of plants and animals on this planet by "natural selection" but evolution in the broader sense of progress in order throughout the cosmos.*

*From relatively undifferentiated matter ("star stuff") emerge galaxies, solar systems, and life-supporting planets, and on these planets emerge increasingly complex and increasingly conscious forms of life until self-conscious, rational entities appear. Then, within the history of these entities, which we know firsthand on this planet as ourselves, there is further progress from barbarism, ignorance, and animal-like violence to enlightenment and peace.*

*Most atheists accept both these premises. But if both are true, why have we not yet reached perfection? The history of time is a history of progress, and there has been an infinite amount of time already; so why has progress reached only a finite level? Another way of posing this is: Why is there still evil? According to the atheistic premises, there should be no more evil already. But there is. Therefore one or both of these premises must be false.*

*Of course the atheist, faced with this argument, will probably modify his second premise, the one about progress, in order to save the first premise, the one about infinite time and no act of creation. So it is not an argument that refutes atheism as such, only "progressive atheism"—that is, atheism plus the idea of progress.*

- d. *Another move made by the apologist—or rather by God himself in revealing this move, which found its way into the scriptures of all three Abrahamic religions—is to trace suffering back to sin. The story in Genesis 3, however literally or nonliterally it is interpreted, necessarily involves the distinction between these two kinds of evil, physical (suffering) and moral (sin) and connects them causally: We suffer because we sinned."*

## **D. Lessons from Scripture**

### **1. The Fall of mankind Gen.3:1-7**

- a. When Eve and Adam disobeyed God to follow their own wisdom several things changed.

1. **Their eyes were opened and they (like God) knew “good and evil”** vs.5. Before their fall they did not have this sophisticated (but painful) understanding. In some ways this transgression while tragic was also the first step in a wonderful story whereby humans would enter a realm of understanding not just pain but also God’s grace.
  2. **They were self-conscious** as never before. They were naked and now ashamed as they covered themselves vs.7.
  3. **They created a conflicted relationship** with each other and with nature. They blamed each other. Their lives were filled with pain.
- b. The story of Adam and Eve’s fall is a picture of life as we experience it.
1. **We are living in a state of sin consciousness.** All humanity shares the common ground of pain and ethical choices.
  2. **We are participants in both the good and the evil.** We are not spectators or bystanders to pain. We receive it and dish it out.
  3. **The pain is both moral and natural.** Like Adam and Eve we create much of the pain in our relationships but we also experience it in our interaction with the natural world.
2. **The parable of the tares in Matt. 13:24-30**
- a. The first observation is that **thinking people are going to have questions about why evil is allowed to persist.** vs.27
    1. And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’
    2. This is not an improper question. We are expected to think and reason from what we see and experience and what God reveals about Himself.
    3. The victim of injustice cries out — Why? Those suffering as a result of the selfishness of others cry out — Why? The people who see those that they love in pain for no sensible reason cry out — Why? These individuals are not crazy, nor do they lack spiritual maturity. They are made in the image of a God who reveals Himself as perfectly great and good.
  - b. The second observation is that **Godly servants are not responsible to eliminate evil even though they may feel some responsibility to eliminate evil.** vs.28
    1. And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ And the slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’
    2. This raises another perplexing question. To what extent does love demand that Christians strive to eliminate evil and pain in the world?
      - a. Striving for justice and doing good have got to be a part of what identifies us as children of God.
      - b. But it is interesting and perplexing to note how Jesus and the Apostles seem to:
        1. Avoid heavy involvement in correcting social injustices and eliminating pain.
        2. Teach a posture of (what seems like) compliance — “don’t resist evil but turn the other cheek.” and now here in vs. 29-30 ‘No, lest while you are gathering up the tares, you may root up the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest;
  - c. The third observation is that **there will one day be perfect justice but it will not be in this age.**

Vs. 30 “Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”

- d. The final observation is that **the existence of suffering is not incompatible with the existence of God; only morally unjustified suffering is.**
  1. God is not the sower of the tares nor is He powerless to deal with them.
    - a. “The man who sowed good seed” = God, “his enemy (Satan) sowed tares among the wheat.”
    - b. When challenged to eliminate the weeds (evil), the man who sowed good seed refuses out of concern for the good seed.
  2. But what do we make of this? It might seem to us that the real threat to the good seed comes more from the weeds that are allowed to persist than from any damage that would result in their removal. There is need of more revelation on this question before we can resolve it.
- e. Trying to ascertain **some of God’s purposes** with regard to suffering can help the Christian deal with it emotionally.
  1. **Some suffering is the fall-out of living in a sinful world.**
    - a. We too easily forget that this world is in a state of rebellion against God’s authority.
    - b. We are not innocent victims in spite of our intoxication with personal rights and expectations.
    - c. Biblical characters were nearly all victims of a fallen world.
  2. **Some suffering is the direct result of the misuse of our responsibility to choose.** Freedom of choice entails the possibility of suffering and pain both as a consequence and a corrective guide.
  3. **Some suffering is a part of the development of virtues and character in God’s fallen people.** This fallen world is the best possible environments to show case the full breadth and depth of God’s nature in and through us. Rom.5:3-4, I Pet.1:6-7, Jas.1:2-5, Rom.12:15, II Cor.1:3-4
  4. **We will not be able to explain some suffering.** We see as through a glass dimly (I Cor.13:12). Like Job we may never know how our pain is a part of a larger story where the secret things belong to God and only our small part in the story is revealed to us (Deut.29:29) so that we might respond to suffering in a way that develops and displays Godly character.
 

*Deut.29:29 “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.”*
3. **JOSEPH’S story in Gen.45:4-8** “Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come closer to me." And they came closer. And he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me



here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.”

- a. Joseph was able to minister to the grief and guilt of his brothers:
    1. Because he was able to see beyond the human limited perspective of his circumstances and recognize the hand of God in all that had transpired. **GOD COULD USE EVIL FOR GOOD.**
    2. By sharing his insight with his brothers both the victim and the victimizer were set free.
  - b. Being a disciple of Christ involves “walking in the light” ( I Jn.1).
    1. Walking in the light is not just a matter of confessing faith in Jesus and obeying His laws.
    2. Walking in the light is a way of looking at life and reality.
      - a. Eph.1 “having the eyes of our heart enlightened”
      - b. Rom.12 “being renewed in our minds”
      - c. Seeing our selves as in need of constant course correction and God as able to use even evil for good.
    3. We have a tendency to view reality in terms of our five senses only.
      - a. A child’s response to “What is religious faith?” “Believing something you know isn't true.”
      - b. **SECULAR HUMANISM** is defining reality and living your life as though God doesn’t exist. Liberal-humanism is the belief that the world is other than it should be and that humans have the power (in reason and action) to change the world so that the inner potential of all human beings can be more fully realized.
4. **JOB’s story.**
- a. Based upon the information Job had through his five senses he was confused.
    1. He lived a godly life.
    2. He suffered terribly.
    3. How could this be happening?
    4. Job’s experience did not fit the verses memorized, the testimonies heard, and the books read.
    5. How could God be great and good?
  - b. Job 42:1-6 “I have declared that which I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Hear now, and I will speak; I will ask Thee, and do Thou instruct me. I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees Thee; Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.”
    1. **JOB** repented of his shortsighted views of God - he had Him in a box. Job was not walking in the light.
    2. **WE** (unlike Job) get to look back stage and see the “big picture”.
  - c. We, like Job, may never know why, but we can have peace and joy knowing that God’s hand is not removed from our life and that we probably don’t see the big picture.
    1. Persecution of the early Jerusalem church led to evangelism.
    2. Paul’s imprisonment resulted in the writing of the epistles.
    3. Paul’s thorn in the flesh brought humility.
    4. The suffering described in Heb.11 is not explained.

- d. WALKING IN THE LIGHT - is more than confessing specific sins. It knows something the world doesn't know.

#### 5. JUDAS' story.

- a. In Matt.26-27 we have a fascinating study in contrast.
  1. Both Peter and Judas betray Christ.
  2. Both experience great remorse for their deeds.
  3. Peter (unlike Judas) was eventually able to see not only what his sin had done to Christ but also what Christ had done to his sin.
  4. I Pet.3:18 "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God"
- b. When Jesus in John 15 exhorts His disciples to ABIDE (remain) lest they be thrown out and burned, He had Judas in mind.

#### 6. PAUL'S story.

- a. In II Cor.12 we learn of Paul's dissidence with respect to pain.
  1. He has a "thorn in the flesh" (vs.7) "a messenger of Satan to torment me" which may have been some sort of physical ailment.
  2. Although he prayed for deliverance from this thorn it was not removed by God or by the efforts of Paul or his friends.
  3. It became clear to Paul that his suffering served a greater purpose – the glory of God's power through Paul's humble circumstances.
  4. Paul became content in this suffering knowing that "when I am weak, then I am strong" vs.10.
- b. We must expect that there are some experiences of suffering in our lives, which allow greater purposes to be demonstrated. It is only as we entertain the reality of these greater purposes that we can be open to living in contentment with our suffering.

#### 7. JESUS' story.

- a. **Not only do we suffer but God allowed evil to remain in such a way that His Son would be its greatest victim.** No one was less deserving of suffering, more deserving of justice, and personally devoid of evil than was Jesus.

**Isa. 53:3-5** "He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem him. Surely our grief's He Himself bore, and our sorrows he carried; yet we ourselves esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him and by His scourging we are healed."

- b. God's Son came as a "*suffering servant*."
  1. Jesus was a poster-boy for human suffering – physical, social, emotional, spiritual.
  2. God chose to highlight human suffering and His empathy for humanities pain by becoming one with us.
  3. Jesus' story relates suffering and pain to sin as a judgment and consequence of humanities active and passive rebellion against man's own nature and purpose as a bearer of the image of God.

- c. The first sign of blindness leading to rejection of God's redemptive gift is the refusal to acknowledge the relationship between sin and death (suffering). Jesus was a suffering servant so as to call out attention to our own suffering, its source and its solution.

## 8. **Shalom.**

- a. "Shalom" is a Hebrew concept that is often translated "peace" – a relaxed inner attitude that is free to love and serve in spite of the pain and injustice that one might be experiencing.
- b. The Arabic word "Islam" has a similar meaning.
  - 1. "Islam" means "submission to the will of God." T.S. Eliot says that Dante's line "*in his will, our peace*" is the single most profound line in all literature.
  - 2. The word "Islam" can also refer to the peace that comes from submission to God.
- c. If we believe that God is both *perfectly* loving and also *perfectly* powerful, we must conclude that there is much in our experience of suffering that we do not, will not, or cannot fully understand. We must walk by faith not by sight.

## **Pastoral advice**

### **How are we to address the problem of evil?**

1. Avoid offering superficial answers to the problem of evil like, "This is God's will" or "God gives these problems to people He knows can handle them." We must recognize that there is ultimately no logical explanation for the problem of evil from any religious or philosophical perspective. We all see dimly.
2. We can assure people that they are not alone, that much of what they experience and see is unfair, and before they conclude that God is not there or does not care they should wait until they stand before Jesus.
3. Our calling is not to explain suffering but to respond with compassion to people who are going through it.
4. We need to seek wisdom in discerning when suffering is the result of an individuals actions, the actions of others, or random evil.

### **Questions that you should be able to answer.**

#### **1. Specific facts you should know.**

- a. What is the challenge that evil brings to the Christian faith?
- b. What is the relevance of Matt.13:24-30 to the problem of evil?
- c. What do the stories of Joseph, Job, and Judas tell us about the problem of evil?

#### **2. Issues that you should be able to discuss.**

- a. What are some of the popular but inadequate answers to the problem of evil?
- b. How should the problem of evil be addressed from Scripture?

**3. Questions you should wrestle with.**

- a. Is the problem of evil a legitimate reason for a non-Christian to doubt the existence of God?