



HOAW Newsletter

The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate. Proverbs 8:13

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Psalm 23:4

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HELPING MEN LIVE LIVES OF INTEGRITY AND HONOR

The Existence of Evil

Dr. Greg Bourgond

Current events here and around the world raise in us the need to understand why these terrible circumstances are happening in ever increasing frequency and intensity. How do we make sense of the evil played out in bold relief in front of us? Are humans predisposed to destroying themselves?

The growing pervasiveness of evil at home and abroad begs the following relevant questions.

- What is the definition of evil?
- Did God create evil?
- Does evil exist apart from the humansoul?
- Why does God allow evil?
- What is the Biblical solution to the problem of evil?
- Is it a virus that hangs in the air or must it be embodied to exist?
- Is evil increasing in the world? Is evil expanding?
- Are the depths of depravity

reaching new lows today?

- Are we seeing new expressions of depravity than we have seen in the past?
- Is the Enemy upping his game? Is he intensifying his influence?

I simply offer my limited perspective at this point. Evil does not exist apart from its symbiotic relationship with sin. Freedom of choice existed before humans. The exercise of choice (or free will) has consequences and evil is one of those consequences.

But let's begin first with a definition of evil.

In its simplest form, evil is the absence of good.

- Evil is that which is morally wrong, sinful, or wicked, in accordance with God's standard of holiness.
- Evil more generally can also refer to anything that causes harm, with or without the moral dimension. For instance, any disaster, tragedy, or calamity can be called evil (1 Kings 17:20).
- From a biblical perspective, anything

that contradicts the holy nature of God is evil (Psalm 51:4). Such evil includes sin committed against other people (murder, theft, adultery) and evil committed against God (unbelief, idolatry, blasphemy).

- Moral evil is not a physical thing; it is a lack or privation of a good thing. The Christian philosopher, **J.P. Moreland** says, *"Evil is a Jack of goodness. It is goodness spoiled. You can have good without evil, but you cannot have evil without good."* The Christian apologist **Greg Koukl** declares, *"Human freedom was used in such a way as to diminish goodness in the world, and that diminution, that lack of goodness, that is what we call evil."*

Did God create evil?

Some suggest if God created all things than he must have created evil. One of God's greatest gifts to humanity is the gift of free will. If we are free to exercise our free will, then we can also choose evil. As one Biblical expert put it, *"In order to have a real choice, God had to allow there to be something besides good to choose. So, God allowed these free angels and humans to choose*

good or reject good (evil). When a bad relationship exists between two good things, we *call that evil, but it does not become a 'thing' that required God to create it... If God had not allowed for the possibility of evil, both mankind and angels would be serving God out of obligation, not choice. He did not want "robots" that simply did what He wanted them to do because of their 'programming.' God allowed for the possibility of evil so that we could genuinely have a free will and choose whether or not we wanted to serve Him.*"

So God did not create evil, but He does allow evil; a consequence of not choosing good. Our appreciation of 'goodness' can only be fully appreciated when contrasted with evil. The exercise of free will to be truly free must offer the choice of evil, or free will is not free at all. Similarly, when love is coerced, when there is no other option but to love, than the meaning and expression of love is, well, meaningless. The very act of the exercise of free will must also present the possibility of choosing evil rather than good. We are free to choose a given action but not its consequences.

Why does God allow evil?

Partly because of the answer to the previous question. Let's dig a little deeper. Since God is holy, righteous, all-powerful, all-knowing, and sovereign, He is certainly capable of preventing evil. Three ways of doing so...

1. God could change everyone's personality so that they cannot sin. This would also mean that we would not have a free will. We would not be able to choose right or wrong because we would be "programmed" to only do right. Had God chosen to do this, there would be no meaningful relationships between Him and His creation.
2. God could compensate for people's evil actions through supernatural intervention 100 percent of the time. One writer on this subject offers several examples...

- God would stop a drunk driver from causing an automobile accident.
- God would stop a lazy construction worker from doing a substandard job on a house that would later cause grief to the homeowners.
- God would stop a father who is addicted to drugs or alcohol from doing any harm to his wife, children, or extended family.
- God would stop gunmen from robbing convenience stores or killing someone.
- God would stop high school bullies from tormenting the brainy kids.
- God would stop thieves from shoplifting or looting.
- God would stop terrorists from flying airplanes into buildings.

"While this solution sounds attractive, it would lose its attractiveness as soon as God's intervention infringed on something we wanted to do. We want God to prevent horribly evil actions, but we are willing to let "lesser-evil" actions slide-not realizing that those "lesser-evil" actions are what usually lead to the "greater-evil" actions."

For example...

- Should God only stop actual sexual affairs, or should He also block our access to pornography or end any inappropriate, but not yet sexual, relationships?
- Should God stop "true" thieves, or should He also stop us from cheating on our taxes?
- Should God only stop murder, or should He also stop the "lesser-evil" actions done to people that lead them to commit murder?
- Should God only stop acts of terrorism, or should He also stop the indoctrination that transformed a person into a terrorist?

3. Another choice would be for God to judge and remove those who choose to commit evil acts. The problem with this possibility is that there would be no one left, for God would have to remove us all. We all sin and commit evil acts (Romans 3:23; Ecclesiastes 7:20; 1 John 1:8). While some people are more evil than others, where would God draw the line? Ultimately, all evil causes harm to others.

God desires our obedience (Deuteronomy 5:29). Obedience is an act of free will. We can choose to obey or disobey BUT it is still our choice. Choices have consequences for us and others within our sphere of influence. There is no victimless sin. What we do in private can and will affect how we behave in public. Hidden sin distorts our perceptions, changes our demeanor, and affects our interactions with others.

We insist on doing things our way and when those choices bring unwelcome consequences, we blame God for not doing anything about it. We cannot have it both ways - free choice brings consequences. We must accept responsibility for our actions.

Does evil exist apart from the human soul? Is it a virus that hangs in the air or must it be embodied to exist?

You can't put evil in a jar. It is not a cloud passing over you that exposes you to a sickness. It is not something you "catch" but something you inherit. Evil is not a "thing." As one commentator puts it, "Evil has no existence of its own; it is really the absence of good. It is the absence of something else.

For example...

- 'Holes' are real, but they only exist in something else. We call the absence of dirt

a hole that cannot be separated from the dirt.

- 'Cold' does not exist; it is the absence of 'heat.'
- 'Darkness' does not exist; it is the absence of 'light.'

Pressing these contrasts a bit further...

- Sweetness cannot be fully appreciated apart from bitterness.
- Order cannot be fully appreciated apart from chaos.
- Beauty cannot be fully appreciated apart from ugliness.

In my understanding of Scripture and theology, evil does not exist apart from a host-created being (including angels). One third of the angels fell with Lucifer when he challenged the authority of God. Adam and Eve had free will in the Garden, the exercise of which resulted in expulsion from the Garden in shame. They are the progenitors of original sin that every human being inherited--a predisposition to live our lives independently from God and His standard for morality.

Humans sin and humans have the potential of great good and jaw-dropping evil. Evil is not a virus, but a part of our spiritual DNA as is the fact that we were created in the image of God bearing in our person the character of God with His communicable attributes. J. I. Packer clarifies what is meant by the image of God.

"When God made man, he communicated to him qualities corresponding to His moral attributes. This is what the Bible means when it tells us that God made man (meaning both men and women) in His own image - namely, that God made man (and woman) a free spiritual being, a responsible moral agent with powers of choice and action, able to commune with Him and respond to Him, and by nature

good, truthful, holy, upright: in a word, godly...The moral qualities which belonged to the divine image were lost at the Fall; God's image in man has been universally defaced, for all mankind has in one way or another lapsed into ungodliness. But the Bible tells us that now, in fulfillment of His plan of redemption, God is at work in Christian believers to repair His ruined image by communicating these qualities to them afresh. This is what Scripture means when it says that Christians are being renewed in the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18) and of God (Colossians 3:10)."

Is evil increasing in the world? Is evil expanding?

Given the fact that sin (and evil) demands a host then it stands to reason that as the population of humanity grows so does the expanse of evil. Some scholars suggest that the destruction of the Tower of Babel was, in part, due to the prospect of evil (and sin) accelerating when concentrated in one place. Much like sound traveling further and faster in water than it does in air because the molecules are spaced more closely in proximity.

GotQuestions.org describes the situation. "The Tower of Babel is described in Genesis 11:1-9. After the Flood, God commanded humanity to "increase in number and fill the earth" (Genesis 9:1). Humanity decided to do the exact opposite, "Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth'" (Genesis 11:4). Humanity decided to build a great city and all congregate there. They decided to build a gigantic tower as a symbol of their power, to make a name for themselves (Genesis 11:4). This tower is remembered as the Tower of Babel. In response, God confused the

languages of humanity so that they could no longer communicate with each other (Genesis 11:7). The result was that people congregated with other people who spoke the same language, and then went together and settled in other parts of the world (Genesis 11:8 -9). God confused the languages at the Tower of Babel to enforce His command for humanity to spread throughout the entire world."

The Flood preceded this event and suggested that when humanity is concentrated in one place sin is rampant. "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5)." Accordingly, 'men are wicked and their hearts imagine evil. When it says' and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" simply means that man would continually come together in disobedience and rebellion without restraint of wickedness." When sin goes unabated, its shrill voice grows louder.

Are the depths of depravity reaching new lows today? Are we seeing new expressions of depravity than we have seen in the past?

The depths of depravity have already been reached. Take a look at what depravities were engaged in the OT. For instance, human sacrifice was a part of the worship of Moloch, a Canaanite god (Leviticus 18:5). According to biblical research, "Moloch worship included child sacrifice, or 'passing children through the fire.' It is believed that idols of Moloch were giant metal statues of a man with a bull's head. Each image had a hole in the abdomen and possibly outstretched forearms that made a kind of ramp to the hole. A fire was lit in or around the statue. Babies were placed in the statue's arms or in the hole. When a

couple sacrificed their firstborn, they believed that Moloch would ensure financial prosperity for the family and future children."

It may seem like depravity has found new depths today. But I would suggest that examples of depravity are more widely known because our communication channels today make it more possible to hear about such depravity more widely. The intensity and depth haven't changed much over the years.

Maybe more novel ways have been created to exercise these atrocities.

Is the Enemy upping his game? Is he intensifying his influence?

Finally, one can easily conclude that the efforts of the Evil One and his minions are increasing in intensity--he has upped his game. One scholar suggested we are living in the "new dark age." The world is getting darker. The liberal notion that the world is getting better has been pretty much discredited given what is happening across the globe.

We are hurtling to a climactic end so graphically described in Scripture. It may not happen in yours or my lifetime, yet the Enemy sees it coming. His desire is to take as many with him as possible--his plan is to discredit God through the lives of those who claim to know Christ but live hypocritical and incongruous lives in opposition to what they say they believe.

Satan is called the great opposer and adversary of our King Jesus Christ. He is the prince of this earthly world, "the tempter" (1 Thessalonians 3:5); "Beelzebub" (Matthew 12:24); "the wicked one" (Matthew 13:19,38); "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31); "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4); "Belial" {2 Corinthians 6:15}, "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2); and

"the accuser of our brethren" (Revelation 12:10). Satan's influence in worldly affairs is also clearly revealed (John 12:31). His various titles reflect his control of the world system, the ruler of this world, the god of this age, and the prince of the power of the air. The Bible declares, "The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19)."

He might have temporary sway, but his day is coming and has already been declared and set. Evil will not ultimately triumph--God will. Whose side will you be on?

What is the Biblical solution to the problem of evil? Excerpted

According to the Bible, the experience of evil is something God understands and acknowledges. God's willingness to grant us the freedom of making our own choices also allows for the possibility of moral evil.

Moral evil leads to physical evil. Even so, God has always acted to soften the blows that evil and suffering land on humanity. He also provided the one and only means to make all wrongs right. One day, God's plan to defeat and destroy evil will be fully complete.

The Bible makes it clear that evil is something God neither intended nor created. Rather, moral evil is a necessary possibility. If we are truly free, then we are free to choose something other than God's will--that is, we can choose moral evil. Scripture points out that there are consequences for defying the will of God--personal, communal, physical, and spiritual.

Taken together, Scripture shows us that physical evils--sickness, famine, war, and death--are the result of moral evil. And moral evil is something human beings are all responsible for, on a personal and a communal level. We suffer because of our own sins at times. Other times, we suffer because of the sins of others. In some

situations, we suffer from simple cause-and-effect.

And we sometimes suffer for a special purpose, in order to bring hope or help--or a warning--to others (see 2 Corinthians 1:4).

The Bible "frames" the problem of evil by keeping it in the proper context. "Evil" is meaningless without something to compare it to. For comparison, we have the original creation of God called "very good" (Genesis 1:31). We have the standard of goodness in God Himself. And we have an explanation for the various causes of evil and suffering.

We see that this physical world is not all there is. Nor is this mortal life all we have been made for. We can experience physical struggles such as "mourning, and "persecution, (Matthew 5:4, 11) while looking to a greater, more permanent state of being "blessed.

Of course, clearly framing what evil is and why we experience it is not the same as resolving the problem of evil. However, even the framing of evil in the context of Christian theology shows that our experience of evil and suffering is not incompatible with God's existence. Amplifying this proof is how the Bible goes beyond accurately describing evil to revealing God's action to remedy it.

Scripture opposes the "problem of evil."

Scripture shows that God did not create evil and does not promote it; rather, it describes God's actions in combatting it. God limits the impact of evil, warns us of the dangers of evil, acts to stop the spread of evil, gives us an escape from evil, and will eventually defeat evil forever.

The Bible explains that God has acted to limit the impact of evil. He has given us clear instructions to avoid being evil. God has also made spiritual power available for those who want to be freed from the power of evil. And, from the very beginning, God

set in motion a plan to make all wrongs right and end our experience of evil and suffering (see Genesis 3:15).

The existence of evil is often presented as an enormous problem for those who believe in God, mostly because of various false dichotomies. God must, it is assumed, disallow all evil or He is evil Himself. God must immediately punish all evildoers and never trouble those who are innocent, or He is assumed not to be omnipotent. These assumptions miss the actual means by which Scripture resolves the problem of evil.

As we've seen, the Bible acknowledges evil, correctly frames it, and shows how God opposes it. Most importantly, though, Scripture explains how the existence of the Christian God defeats the problem of evil.

Rather than creating us as amoral robots or dooming mankind for our sin or condoning our sin by leaving it unresolved, God chose the one and only way to settle the problem. He created us with the freedom to choose our actions, and then extended forgiveness to us. Forgiveness is the Christian answer to the problem of evil.

Forgiveness is different from condemnation - it releases the condemned from punishment. Forgiveness is also different from excusing evil-it acknowledges that there is wrong to be made right. The basis of our forgiveness, the cross, is the intersection of God's perfect moral character, love, and omnipotence. Since He chose to take our penalty upon Himself, all suffering and evil can be overcome. According to the Bible, the evil we experience in this life has already been defeated, and everyone has access to that victory.

Taken as a whole, as it is intended, the Bible describes evil as something God allowed, but never condoned, for the sake of our free will. All through history, God has taken steps to limit the influence of

evil. And, most importantly, God Himself took the consequences of our sin, so every person can have access to forgiveness and salvation. As a result, all sin, evil, and suffering will someday be completely ended. Beyond the philosophical or theological aspects of this issue, Scripture in and of itself goes a long way to neutralizing the power of the "problem of evil."

OTHER NEWS



Heart of a Warrior Ministries offers four journeys you can take to become who God created you to be.

The Foundation

(Ground Zero) helps establish strong biblical foundations for the battles ahead.

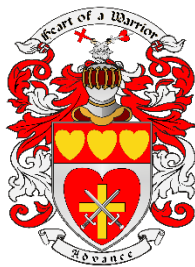
The Compass (Phase I) calibrates a warrior's heart and tunes that heart to the heart of God. I am currently leading 45 at Calvary Church WBL Campus on this journey.

The Map (Phase II) helps men focus on what matters in accordance with their unique divine wiring.

The Guide (Phase III) develops the spiritual discipline of being mentored and mentoring others.

Go to our website for more details.
www.heartofawarrior.org/journeys/

If you would like to contact me directly, email me at HOAWMinistries.com.



Donations

Please consider giving to Heart of a Warrior Ministries. HOAW Ministries needs your financial support. Our ability to help men live God-honoring lives depends on the resources we can use to that end. Simply go to the donations tab on [heartofawarrior.org](http://www.heartofawarrior.org). Thank you for being a subscriber.

Check out **The Store** on our website (www.heartofawarrior.org). There are downloadable resources you can use to lead

a group through Phases I, II, or III, Foundations of a Warrior, and Bible Study Guidelines.

NOTE: Throughout the course of the year, I will be adding helpful and informative resources to Heartofawarrior.org. They may be found on the **RESOURCES** page of the website.

Websites for Men

Heart of a Warrior Ministries
www.Heartofawarrior.org

Legacy Minded Men
www.legacymindedmen.org

Church for Men
<http://churchformen.com/>

Resolute
<https://beresolute.org/>

Life Way Men
<https://blog.lifeway.com/leadingmen/>

Men's Fraternity
<http://www.mensfraternity.com/>

Man in the Mirror
<http://maninthemirror.org/>

Men with No Regrets
<http://www.menwithnoregrets.org/>

National Collision of Men's Ministries
<http://ncmm.org/>

Every Man's Battle
<https://newlife.com/emb/>

Iron Sharpens Iron
<http://ironsharpensiron.net/>

Ransomed Heart Ministries
<http://www.ransomedheart.com/>

Band of Brothers
www.bandofbrothers.org/

Man Up God's Way
<http://www.manupgodsway.org/>

Iron Works
<http://www.ironworksmen.com/>