

Is God Responsible for the Evil and Suffering in This World?

On Dec. 6, 1829, George Wilson and James Porter robbed a U.S. mail carrier in Pennsylvania. Both men were subsequently captured, tried and found guilty of robbing the mail and putting the life of the driver in jeopardy and sentenced to execution by hanging.

Before the execution, some of Wilson's influential friends pleaded for mercy from President Andrew Jackson who issued a formal pardon, but Wilson refused to accept it!

His response must have been a first, because the justice system did not know what to do with him. Was he off the hook for what he had done, or not? The case was sent to the U.S. Supreme Court, and Chief Justice John Marshall explained that a refused pardon was no pardon, so Wilson was sent to the gallows.

Evil and lawlessness are not new problems; the fact that God has not already put an end to them has caused some people to doubt or desert their faith—and many more feel a sense of deep disappointment. God has always been Creator, King, Judge and Savior. He continues to rule over all and have supreme authority. Because He is holy, righteous and just, we can be certain He will not (and cannot) let sin go unpunished. Yet He is also gracious, loving, merciful and patient, so He has provided a way of rescue for those who place their faith in Him. Jesus Christ bore the consequences of evil on the cross so that we can experience forgiveness, love and the kind of peace only God can provide. Through Jesus, God offers sinful humanity a pardon.

So we have a choice to make. We can be proud like George

Wilson, reject an offer of mercy and go to the gallows defiant until the end, or we can admit we are sinners and accept the mercy of God. God permits every individual to exercise his or her free will within the boundaries of His divine purpose and redemptive plan for the world. When someone refuses divine mercy, love and power, God allows the continuing downward spiral of individuals and society.

Very few would deny that evil exists and that it wreaks havoc in our world. The reason we need a pardon is that we are by nature drawn to the evil that surrounds us and are easily entangled in it. But who is responsible for the evil and suffering in this world?

In one sense, we are all guilty of the unraveling of society. To the extent that we don't do good, we extend the arm of evil and foster injustice in our world. The source of trouble is not our fellow men but the ancient enemy, Satan, who stands in the shadow of freedom, waiting to hatch his evil trap. So skilled is he in his tactics that we rarely acknowledge him as the culprit. He generates all manner of evil but leaves us thinking that evil is an impersonal force that emerges from poverty, greed, ignorance or a myriad of other sources.

From its opening chapters, the Bible confirms that Satan is the personification of evil. He is introduced in the book of Genesis as the serpent who craftily tempted Eve to betray her Creator. Soon afterward, Satan was there to take advantage of Cain's bitterness toward his brother Abel. God intervened and warned Cain to deal with his anger before it escalated into something worse (Gen. 4:7). God tried to convince Cain that Satan's desire was to tempt him to do wrong, but that He had provided everything Cain needed to resist the enemy and to rule over him. Cain chose to disregard his position as a son and forfeited his dominion to Satan. This departure from God's design would lead Cain and others into despair and ruin.

Some people want to blame God for the evil in the world, but

this tendency is yet another tactic of the enemy. When Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, the cunning serpent asked Eve, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1, NKJV). His loaded question subtly challenged her to question the goodness of God, suggesting that Eve was being denied the full expression of her freedom. It is similar to what you hear today when people question God's ability or willingness to intervene or stop evil.

"If God were really good, He wouldn't make me endure such unpleasantness."

Regardless how society frames the question or the argument, the blame always seems to rest on a restrictive God who is holding back the best from His children.

Even though freedom has been elevated to such a high level, it is nearly impossible to find a situation in which we can eliminate virtue. Modern man is torn between freedom and virtue. Freedom is usually preferred until one person's freedom to choose encroaches on another's individual freedom. When this happens, there is a cry for justice.

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His new book, *One Nation Without Law* is available now through major online retailers and bookstores nationwide. In *One Nation without Law*, Phil warns against the emerging trend of lawlessness in America and around the world. He looks at the history of unruliness going back to slavery, the

treatment of Native Americans, the protest movement of the 1960's and more recent incidents including police involved shootings and terrorist attacks. He links this research to interpret the uprising of unruliness and the role it plays in our nation now as well as the end times. For more information, visit .