

Dealing With the Problem of Evil

by Mark Spence

Mark Spence addresses the complex issue of evil and suffering in relation to God's goodness and provides practical strategies for engaging with skeptics.

Duration: 47:49

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Revelation 21:1-6

Topics: "Open-Air Preaching"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the problem of evil and how it relates to the existence of God. They emphasize that evil is a real and significant issue that must be acknowledged. The speaker also shares a personal anecdote about discussing the moral argument for God's existence with others. They highlight the importance of making the message practical and personal, encouraging believers to share their faith and apply their beliefs in everyday life. The sermon concludes with a prayer for God's guidance and a call to study and defend one's faith.

Transcript

All right. You ever get that feeling that everybody's looking at you? Yeah. Let's pray.

Father, once again, I feel so inadequate to be able to open up your word. And I'm so blessed that you had me on your mind when you sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross 2,000 years ago, seeing nothing inside of me. Not because of your great foreknowledge, knowing that I was going to pick you, or for whatever reason, you invaded my life.

You didn't ask my permission. And yet you did it anyways. And I just want to say thank you.

And we say thank you, God, that you're God, we're not. You've given us our marching orders to go. And I pray that you'd help us to go, that you'd help us to be ready to give an answer to everyone for that, that hope that lies within us, that we can point people to Christ, that we can say, behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.

We want to be a conduit where you can flow through us, and you can reach out to a lost and a dying world of people that just hate you, that despise you. And I know, and I've come to be convinced that if you were to open up hell for five minutes and allow people to come out and repent, they would come right up to you and curse you to your face. We need your intervention, God.

We need you to open up the eyes of the lost. And unless you show up here, we're here in vain. And we simply wish to see Jesus Christ.

Thank you for being our all in all. Thank you for entrusting me with the pulpit, not because you see something good in me, but I believe you have a word to share. And I pray that in simplicity, you would accomplish that.

So we sanctify this place, this room, our ears, our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ for a holy work, and that you would do whatever it takes, whatever it takes, no matter how much it hurts, no matter how much we kick and scream, that you, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, would be glorified here today, and that you would light a fire inside of us, that we would go into the highways and the byways and the gutterways, and we would compel people to come. I would point people to you, and we would say, come and see what good thing came out of Nazareth. What good, beautiful, and wholesome individual you are.

We love you because you first loved us. We submit this to you now, in Jesus' name, amen. Revelation chapter 21.

I recently read my email that was sent back to me in May. I get quite a few emails, just because of the job that I do. And I saw that today was going to be on preaching, and tomorrow's on teaching.

Well, we're going to do a lot of teaching in both. Let me give a little commercial plug. I want to say thank you to Dr. James White for being patient with me.

We had the opportunity to fly him out and to help us out with the filming of the third season of our TV show. And I went out with him on about a half a dozen meals. And I had an argument concerning the doctrines of grace.

And my argument was this. You mean to tell me that I have more love for my unsaved parents, for my brothers, than God does? I care more where they're going to spend eternity than God does? And he was so amazingly patient with me as he was slow to speak and he said, Mark, your argument is philosophical. And I could never win an argument against your philosophy.

This is how cults are formed. Are you willing to bow your knee to whatever scripture says? Really, are you willing to bow your knee to whatever scripture says? If scripture says it, are you willing to say that's it? That settles it. And I paused.

And I think I was quick to respond, but it seemed like an eternity. And I said, you know, I came out of a denomination that encouraged me greatly to study the word of God. And when I would study the word, when I would want to study commentaries, they would tell me the commentaries to read.

They'd go, you want to study? Calvinism. You want to study eschatology? Well, then read our guys. Read Bryson.

Read other people. So a bunch of us, a bunch of my friends and I, we would gather around the table and we would begin to study. And we said, wait, is it real study when you tell me what to study? If you're going to tell me what to study, can't I read both sides? Don't tell me that I can only read your guys, your people.

And shortly thereafter, I left that denomination. I got kind of forced to move on. And I attended a beautiful church in Anaheim Hills in California.

The pastor is Philip DeCourcy. He was discipled by John MacArthur. And I feel like I'm just freshly born again.

I feel like, honestly, that I shouldn't be up here, that my eyes have been opened up to the reality that it's not about me. It's not about me. It's about God.

It's about him. There's nothing I can do to gain the approval of God. If there's anything I could do, I would be patting myself on the back.

If there's anything you can do, God would say, get on you. But he doesn't. It's not about you.

It's about him. And what I want to do, I know I'm off subject, but what I want to do is I want to be very practical. And I want to give you some very good tools on how to approach a subject called the problem of evil.

I thank Greg Bonson and Augustin and Greg Cockel for helping me out enlarge with this. And you might recognize a little bit of their work inside here with, obviously, my own put inside there. But I want to be very practical with you today.

Revelation chapter 21, starting in verse 1, I want to start off with scripture simply because it's safe. But also, I was given a very sour and bitter letter about a month ago. It's very shocking.

But we'll start off with scripture before so. And it says this. Now, I saw a new heaven and a new earth.

For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. And also, there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, behold, the tabernacle of God is with men. And he will dwell with them. And they shall be his people.

God himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying.

There should be no more pain for the former things that passed away. Then he who sat on the throne said, behold, I make all things new. And he said to me, write, for these words are true and faithful.

And he said to me, it is done. I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

He who overcomes shall inherit all things. And I will be his God. And he shall be my son.

But the cowardly, the unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. I want you to consider for a moment this powerful letter that crossed my desk. And it starts off saying these words.

I've been taught since I was a little girl that God is love and a benevolent father. I've been trying to understand this in light of the blatant ambiguities and explicit contradictions in these concepts. You see, man has been suffering ever since his inaugural visit to this earth.

As soon as he arrived, he was haunted by wild animals and suffered starvation and dehydration. Almost 2 thirds of all children ever born have died before reaching the age of 10. Almost 1 third of all ladies have died in childbirth.

Of all the people who came upon this earth, very few have lived past youth and still less to ripe old age. Floods, pestilence, and epidemics have obliterated human societies. Plagues have killed millions in times past, while recently a tsunami wiped out more than 25,000 people in a matter of seconds.

And most of those who died are the poorest, living near oceans in ramshackle huts. God just creates these millions of innocent people and puts them through all sorts of hardships and sufferings. People offer their prayers to you, God, and you respond by sending down thunder and lightning, famine and floods, horrendous plagues and contagious diseases, earthquakes, tsunamis, and tempests.

And in the end, death. Nice payoff. Nice answer to prayer, God.

You seem to follow no norm and no human rights. It's not safe to walk down the street at night. We must keep every door locked and every window shut.

Evil runs rampant in the streets and there is no justice. From crooked cops to paid off judges, no one is to be trusted, not even you. Where are you when nearly 600 women are raped each day? How about the 200,000 children that are abducted each year? Where are you? Seriously, are you asleep? Don't you care? Can you hear them cry at night? It's obvious you're too preoccupied to interject in the life of just one of the 2,000 people that will take their own life today.

Let's see if you're too busy to intercept me from taking mine. You are a monster a hundred times over. Signed, The Conscientious Observer.

I think this dramatic and moving account echoes some of our deepest apprehensions about God. It is a gross charge against Christianity. It's the one that I run into most often.

It's the one I run into on the streets. I get a lot of phone calls and emails at the ministry. If you call the ministry and you wanna talk to Ray, you first get me before I pass you on to Ray to see if it's something that I might be able to answer.

This accusation, this charge against Christianity, where is God? I believe that in one sense, it's the hardest to answer. I don't mean it's difficult in its substance. I think for those of you that know how to answer the question that it's quite complex, but it is rather easy to answer this question, this charge against Christianity.

And what I wanna do is I wanna give you some strategies that I've learned on how to answer this question. And if time permits at the end, be able to show you how to answer this question in the open air and even on a one-on-one encounter when you hit the streets. But sometimes it strikes us mute, especially if the problem is not merely intellectual, but it's personal.

Aren't those the two ways that we answer this question? It's philosophical and it's personal. What exactly is the problem? Well, here's the problem if you didn't catch it already. You Christians say that God is good.

You say that he's powerful. But if he was good, he would want to deal with the problem of evil. And if he was powerful, he would be able to deal with the problem of evil, but evil still exists.

So either your God is too frail to oppose evil or he's too sinister to care, or more possible, your God simply does not exist. Let me break it down even more another step for those that didn't catch it. You Christians think you're bad.

You say your hearts are deceitfully and desperately wicked, right? You bet, absolutely. Curious. If you were to see a six-year-old girl being molested, raped, and ultimately knowing that she was going to die by a 14-year-old boy, would you step in and stop that atrocious act from happening if it was within your power to do so? We say, yeah, absolutely.

Okay, well, here's the disconnect. Because if you Christians say that you're bad, yet you would intervene, where does that place God whom you alone say is good when he doesn't intervene and prevent that molestation? When he allows that tsunami? When he allows 9-11 to occur? Where is he? You know what? I think I'm left with the conclusion that your God is not good. Or maybe he is good, he just doesn't know what's going on.

He's not omniscient. Or maybe he is omniscient, but he's stuck in the planet of Pluto and he's not omnipresent and he can't intervene. Does that make sense? Are you guys tracking along with me? It's a gross charge against Christianity.

It's enough to push you back upon your heels. How many people here would say that you are very confident on how you would answer that question? I don't want you to have to come up to me later and say, all right, I was just raising my hand because everybody else was raising their hand. I wanna know how many people here are actually confident when faced with this gross accusation, will know precisely where to go if you're given this question out on the streets.

Raise your hand nice and high. One third to one half. Don't you wanna know? It's the most common question that I come across and you're gonna see why that is so.

There's more to it than just being philosophical. It's personal and that's why this objection is so difficult. And I think that's our problem.

I think that's your problem as well. You see, the person you might not be wondering through the second law of thermodynamics or the laws of non-contradiction. You see, it's almost irrelevant to what someone might say.

They want to be told, why did this happen? Why did this force me into the shower fully clothed, sucking my thumb down inside of a fetal position? C.S. Lewis, the great apologist who I don't agree 100% with said this in the 21st century when he faced his own personal tragedy. It wasn't a crisis of logic, it was a crisis of loss. It was personal.

He married a woman 20 years his younger, Joy Davidman. And shortly thereafter, within that 10 years, she had died, she had come down with cancer. He married her out of convenience, yes, but he fell deeply in love with this woman.

He was so heartbroken that he wrote a book. It's called *A Grief Observed*. And it was a book, in essence, in which he preached to himself, why are you downcast on my soul? Hope in God.

But when he wrote that book, he used a pseudonym, a name that he created. He didn't want his name on the book. He didn't want anybody to know that he was struggling with this problem of evil.

So his colleagues came along and gave him the book and said, look, this is exactly what you're going through. This person is right on, you need to read it. He finally had to confess that he was the one that wrote the book.

You see, the point for Lewis wasn't that God didn't exist, he knew too much, but rather the argument was personal as he dealt with his own grief. He just questioned the goodness of God. Why did you allow that to happen to me? Why do you allow that evil in the world? When's it gonna stop? Seriously, do you hear my prayers? I feel like I'm going in circles.

Bertrand Russell, the great 20th century philosopher, he said, how can you talk about God when you're kneeling at the bed of a dying child? Don't talk about God when you're kneeling at the bed of a girl who didn't even get a chance to live her life. The French poet, Moteler in the 19th century said, if there is a God, he's a devil playing a game with his creation. Tom Waite, the English composer slash actor said, don't you know there ain't no devil? There's just God when he's drunk.

The dual sides of God playing a game with his creation. So that's the challenge we face. And what I wanna do today is I wanna tackle this head on.

I'm not afraid to answer this question. You know what I am afraid of? I'm afraid to hand out a track. I'm afraid to open air preach.

And I've done it hundreds of times. My greatest fear in an open air preaching session is to come across no one. I would love to be like Jeff Rose, who can preach to people that are walking by, people who seem maybe not really listening.

But I wanna have somebody that objects. I wanna have somebody that says, who are you to say what I believe is wrong? I wanna have these objections come the way, not because I have all the answers, but I wanna hear the objections. I believe Christianity is intelligent.

And I believe God is worthy to have me bring a defense on who he is and what he's up to. So that's the challenge we face. And I wanna approach this not as a pastor, not as a great theologian.

We're gonna get that really soon. I wanna approach this subject honestly, as I break it down, I wanna approach this subject just as a man who puts his pants on one leg at a time, just like you, with my own fears, as a man who has been driven into the shower fully clothed, sucking his thumb in a fetal position like I have. I didn't think I was gonna make it here this weekend, facing such an amazing, one of the greatest trials I've ever experienced just two days ago, thinking I'm not gonna be able to get on this plane.

But worthy is the lamb to receive the reward of the sufferings, to be able to talk about God in the midst of a group of people. It's hard to pass that up. I faced my own personal crisis.

And I know that the skeptic has as well. Basically, the answer to evil is God, specifically Jesus Christ on a cross at Calvary. Really, that's the answer.

You know, recently I spoke at a conference and right before I spoke, the second person before I spoke was Ravi Zacharias, right after him was Greg Kulkal, and then it was me. All right. Well, that doesn't bother me.

What was weird and unusual about it was we all had the same exact topic. And we didn't know. We all were going to discuss the moral argument for the existence of God.

I didn't get the email. I didn't get the phone call. Kirk Cameron looks over at me, because we sword fight quite a bit concerning these subjects.

He looks over at me and he just starts laughing. And he says, what are you gonna talk about? And he goes, I got an idea. Make it practical.

Not a lot of people are. Make it personal. Show these people how to hit the streets.

How to apply the methodology in which you're teaching. I recently read a book on presuppositional apologetics. In the very last chapter, I'm sure half of you have read it, is entitled Taking It to the Streets.

I said, amen, that's what I'm about. I don't want to read in theory necessarily as much as I want to see practicum. Show me how to apply this.

How do I hit the streets? That's what I want to do. I want my life to count. And the opening paragraph said, you know, it's not my natural ability to apply this methodology out on the street.

But let me give you a fictitious conversation between a Christian and a non-Christian applying the presuppositional apologetical method. I took the book. I didn't even read the conversation.

I took it and I threw it across the wall. Now, presuppositional apologetics is sweeping through the way of the master. It is knocking people over, being slain in the spirit, let me say, in a very good way.

Trying to get a hold of every debate, every article, every book that we possibly can. Ray Comfort came up to me and he goes, Mark, show me presuppositional apologetics in the open air. Bring it down in a very simple fashion so that people can get it.

Kirk and I were going back and forth trying to just nail this down. I don't know a lot of people who can simplify it and yet a lot of people that are in presuppositional apologetics says it is very simple. And I say, it is simple for you, not for us.

We have a sixth grade education. Make it simple for us. So that's what we are trying to do, to simplify it down for the common person in the open air and on a one-on-one encounter.

And you're gonna recognize it a lot in our season four TV show, which will be out in about six months. So I wanna make two observations that are gonna simplify this problem immensely. Then I wanna share the biblical view that removes the apparent philosophical contradiction.

And I wanna show you how God solved the problem, which is the personal side. In other words, when people say, where was God? You say he was right there in the thick of it. You ready? Point number one, if you're taking notes, evil is something.

It's pretty profound, isn't it? Evil is something. But it actually is, I mean, when you consider it. I mean, what has to be the case in order for you to even raise the question? Well, what has to be the case is that there has to be evil in the world.

Well, that's right. Things actually have to be bad. Now let me tell you why that's so important, because there's a very, very popular point of view today called relativism.

Which most of you are familiar with. Relativism, in a nutshell, is the philosophical position that all points of view are equally valid and that all truth is relative to the individual. Now catch this.

This means that all moral positions, all philosophical ideas, all political ideologies are up to each individual to decide what is right and wrong. In other words, there is no right or wrong. There is no good or bad.

There is no sacred and secular. There is no evil. Self-refuting statements, you ready? This is what we catch out on the streets.

I catch it every time I open air preach. I talked to this, I had a debate, a discussion in the open air last Friday in Santa Monica with this gentleman who had a PhD over at Cambridge, much smarter than me. I just happened to be right.

I made all the difference in the world in our discussion. And he was spewing out these self-refuting statements. And let me see if you've recognized, if you've heard a couple of these yourself.

You can't know anything for sure. To which I say, are you sure? Are you sure you can't know anything for sure? You shouldn't judge. Is that your judgment? If you shouldn't judge, then why are you judging my judgment? You shouldn't judge.

That's your worldview. Your worldview says you shouldn't judge. So listen, don't judge me.

That's not part of my worldview. My worldview says, hey, win judge, use righteous judgment. You can't know anything.

Now how do you know you can't know anything? Nobody's right. Nobody's right. Listen, nobody's right.

There's so many different worldviews out there, so many different religions, nobody's right. Are you right that nobody's right? Because if you're right that nobody's right, well then you're wrong about nobody being right. So who's right? I say you're wrong.

See how simple that is? It is extremely simple. And what is true for you is not what is true for me. What is true for you is not what is true for me.

To which I say, that's true. And what's true for me is that you're wrong. Because you are wrong.

And every other worldview has to begin to borrow from my worldview to make account for anything that would make sense inside this universe. You see, there's only a real problem with evil if evil exists in an objective standard. In other words, why does God allow that evil out there? That was terrible.

That's an evil thing. But you notice that such a statement requires an objective or an absolute standard by which you are comparing evil to. If you're a relativist, you do not believe in evil.

The word evil merely describes things you don't like. You have to be a quiet observer as you say, that's not my preference. Let me apply it out on the streets now.

You ready? I'm out on the streets. I approach an individual. I have my gospel track ready.

I hand it over to him. And I say, hey, did you get one of these? He says, what is it? That's a gospel track. Hey, what do you think happens on the other side? You know, when we go from time on into eternity, what's gonna happen? He goes, oh, well, I'm an atheist.

I go, oh? Would you consider yourself to be a good person? He says, oh yeah, absolutely. See, the latest Barna poll shows that 53% of Americans believe that they are good people. In fact, scripture says most men will each proclaim their own goodness.

And I say, define good for me. And he does so, and he says something along these lines. Well, I provide for my family.

I don't cheat on my wife. I don't cheat on my taxes. I donate money to different local charitable organizations.

I think that makes me a pretty good guy. And right then, Henry the Humanist, who's also an atheist, comes walking along. He says, hey, I'm sorry.

I don't mean to interrupt, but I've noticed that you're talking about good. I think I'm a pretty good guy too. But funny enough, my definition is the exact opposite of Alan the Atheist.

You see, I'm only good if I am cheating on my wife, if I cheat on my taxes. I provide for my family from time to time. But really, it's not my main thrust.

Why do I work? To get money, sure, to feed my pleasures, to donate money to this local charitable organization called Al-Qaeda. It's a neat little cell group down the road. And I look over at Alan and I go, Alan, is he wrong in his worldview, his definition of good? He says, absolutely he's wrong.

I say, how do you know? Where did you get your definition from? And he can really only pull it from one of three places. He got it from himself, which is what he did. He got it from society or he got it from legislature.

Really, there's no other place to really get your definition unless we're gonna hit another supernatural book. Suppose it's supernatural. Alan, where did you get your definition from? I got it from myself.

I don't need any authoritative figure telling me right and wrong, good and bad, sacred and secular. I go, oh, Henry, where did you get your definition from? He says, the same place. I don't need anybody telling me what is good and bad, right and wrong.

So Alan interrupts my conversation with Henry and he says, listen, you can't harm anyone. You're hurting people. To which Henry says, define harm.

Your hairstyle is harming me. If it's up to each individual to decide what is good and bad, then you can't tell me that I'm not being harmed by your hairstyle. Because we know that harm isn't merely just physical harm.

It could also be an emotional state. We know that kids can be subjected to harm by listening to something that they shouldn't listen to or watching something on the telly that they shouldn't watch. They were never touched, but they were harmed.

How can you say he's not being harmed by your hairstyle? Well, harm, I would say it threatens civil order. Order, what is order? You see, one man's messy desk is another man's filing cabinet. He goes, well, we have laws that are set up.

Laws? So does legislature, society get to determine what is good and bad, right and wrong? You know, not too long ago, right before our president took office, we had a lot of different propositions that poked up out in Southern California. I took a team out to Hollywood. I had a microphone and I set up a microphone out inside the crowd and I held up a sign and the sign said yes on eight.

And it was a proposition saying that marriage should be between simply a man and a woman. If you wanted to vote no on eight, you were saying no, marriage should be between two men or two women. So unashamedly, I held up the sign and I had a microphone out and I said, hey, liberal Hollywood, anybody wanna have a nice civil conversation? And someone took me up on the offer.

He's an actor on *Desperate Housewives*. He graduated from USC. He stepped up to the microphone and this is what he said.

He said, who are you, who are you to say that two men who love each other cannot have the same enjoyable rights that you have with your wife? Stop the hate, and this was the tagline. Stop the hate, don't discriminate, no on eight. And he worked up the crowd and they were in a frenzy.

It was on Halloween night. People were in costumes and crazy, crazy stuff. And he had the support of everybody there.

Who are you? Really, who are you to say what we do is wrong? And he said, sir, if I use your logic and I bring your logic to its logical conclusion, then consider this. If it is up to society to determine what marriage should be and in your eyes, it should be just two men, why are you stopping there? Why not three men? Why not four men? Why not a little boy marrying his mom? Why not a boy marrying his dog? How about the man that's up inside that tree up in Northern California for three years to marry that tree? He goes, well, that's absurd. Says who? Says who? Who says it's absurd? Because you see, it is absurd to think that a man can marry a man not even 50 years ago.

Absurd. And if you're gonna redefine our terminology on what marriage is, where do you stop? I believe I'm the only one with a consistent worldview that can say where the origin of marriage has come from and God alone has come up with the definition of marriage it's a man and a woman. You cannot do that.

Sir, one final thought. What prevents a man from marrying himself, a man who's been diagnosed with dual personalities? Great tax breaks. Well, that's absurd.

So is your argument, sir. And I had a chance to talk about good and bad, right and wrong. Well, listen, if society gets to determine what is morally right and wrong, then people ought to do whatever their society tells them to do.

It also makes this view impossible to criticize another society's practices no matter how bizarre or morally repugnant they may seem to us. We can't lift our nose up to point our finger down upon Adolf Hitler, who by and large used the argument at Nuremberg when he said society allowed, backed up my disposal of these 6 million blacks, Jews, Christians, and gypsies. If you're gonna say society gets to determine it, then where do you stop? You see, listen, some things are wrong regardless of what society dictates, and that includes plundering innocent Jews and pressing them into forced labor and exterminating them.

This last Friday when I was talking to this atheist, Sam, I said, how do you get a defined society? Because that was his argument. Society gets to determine what is good and bad. I go, is it two people? Is it five people? Is it 100 people? Is it within a city? Is it within a country? He says, well, morals evolve, which got me excited when he said that.

I said, so you're saying basically in times past or in times future, rape might have been or might be acceptable. Under what cases will rape be acceptable? Sir, is pornography right or wrong? It's right, it's right. Is child pornography right or wrong? It's not my preference.

Sir, at what age would you like your precious little daughter to get involved with that beautiful profession of pornography? No answer. You see, they might try to hold on to their logic, which would become a true sociopath, but they would never hire somebody, an individual that would support their true worldview. You would never hire an individual who says, it's up to each individual to determine what is right and wrong.

I'm gonna hire a bookkeeper with that worldview to take care of my finances. I'm gonna hire a babysitter with the worldview that he can do whatever he wants to do. You see, this is the number one point of view of most Americans.

They might be Mormon, Anglican, Episcopalian, but they become a relativist. So, C.S. Lewis said, a man cannot call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. We need a definition outside of ourselves, otherwise we would never agree.

Let me give you a pretty good definition. To be good means to be morally perfect in thought, word, and deed. How many of us qualify? You see, good is a reflection of God.

God alone is good. The rich young ruler came to Jesus and he said, good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? He said, why do you call me good? There's none good, but one, that is God. I think you get the idea of relativism, but I simply wanna say that evil is something, but only, yeah, excuse me, evil is something, but only the Christian can attest to what evil is, because we have something to compare it to.

No other worldview really can. First point, evil is something. Second point, because we have to move right along, that is evil is not something.

First point, evil is something. Second point, evil is not something. It is not something.

It is not something tangible. Sure, evil is real, the condition is real, but it's not some type of black diabolical stuff that floats around the universe that globs onto us and attaches to us, and now we do evil things. I recently went over to Krispy Kreme Donuts and I purchased a dozen donuts, brought them over into the ministry, put them in the break room for anybody that wanted one.

So I went back for thirds, because I wanted one, and by the time I was going back for the 12th donut, I ate all 11 donuts. As I went back for the 12th, Ray Comfort looks over at me and he says, you glutton, what are you doing? I go, oh, I just, well, nobody wants them. I like them, they're good.

All right, speaking of donuts, how many people here have eaten a donut whole? Not the center of a donut, not that little glub blot of cholesterol-filled goober that will make you die someday, clog up your arteries, but I'm saying a donut whole, not a whole donut, but the center of a donut, the whole of a donut. Nobody, none of us have. None of us have eaten a donut whole.

The whole of a donut, none of us have, why? Because a donut whole is where a donut ain't, right? Well, that's kind of like what evil is. Evil is the same thing. It's, as Augustine said, it's a privation, it's a void.

There's really no true definition of evil that we can come up with. We can define good, and anything outside of good is evil. Well, it's kind of like my shadow.

There's no such thing as a shadow. A shadow is merely a word that we've come up with to describe the absence of light. There's no darkness, there's just light.

We can measure light. In the same way, there's no such thing as coldness. There's just heat, we can measure heat, but there comes a time when you can no longer measure heat.

It's something like negative 456 degrees where it can't get any colder. Coldness is an absence of heat. Darkness is an absence of light.

Evil, catch this, is an absence of good. It's a privation, it's a void, it's an absence of God. I think the biblical record, to move right along, can explain to us what really is going on.

In fact, if you read the first three chapters of the Bible, in the last three chapters of the Bible, you will find the issue described, explained, and resolved. One might even say that the entire gospel is given to deal with the problem of evil. You see, when God created mankind, he said, it is good.

He created the world, he said, it's good. Animals, it's good. So what happened? He gave you and me the right to choose what I wanna do.

You see, my little boy Noah, he's 10 years old, he's inside of his room, he says, I wanna go outside and play with my friends. I say, no, you have no choice, stay in your closet. He goes, dad, allow, what? Dad, allow me to choose what I'm gonna do, knowing that he's going to fail, knowing that he's frail, knowing that he's gonna choose to sin eventually.

In fact, he doesn't even need to leave his closet in order to sin inside of his heart, to kill me inside of his heart, to disobey me inside of his heart. But see, that third point, which comes along very quickly, is evil is an intruder. It's not the way God always intended it to be.

And there's gonna come a time when he is going to deal with evil. You see, the objection is raised like this. I believe that God should do away with evil.

Why doesn't God do away with evil? Really? Do you really want God to do away with evil? It's been said, if God comes tonight at 12 o'clock to get rid of the evil in the world, where will you be at 1201? Honestly, here's the answer. I think we're all very quick to say that rape is wrong, molestation is wrong, kidnapping is wrong, murder is wrong. All these things are atrocious.

The stuff that was done to me was wrong. It was wrong, it was evil. Why are we stopping there? We continue on with the checklist that belongs to God, and he says, not only am I upset at those things, not only are those things evil, but so is covetousness.

It's evil in the sight of a holy God. Lying, evil in the eyes of a holy God. Stealing, blasphemy, dishonoring your parents.

It is evil, it is grotesque. God cannot look upon those things. It is evil in the eyes of God.

You really want God to come down here to earth and get rid of the evil in this world? How about he starts with you, and he doesn't? Why isn't God dealing with the problems of evil? I can't, because of time, get into that. I have another hour here. But listen, I don't completely understand how my digestive system works, but it doesn't keep me from eating.

I made a prayer back in 1994. I said, God, no matter how much it hurts, no matter how much I kick and scream, never let me be out of your will. I said it in my earlier, my initial prayer here.

God, you have permission. I call heaven and hell as witnesses to use me the way you wanna use me, to do what you wanna do, whatever you wanna do. And I understand what I'm praying.

I understand that that includes the ability, perhaps, of taking away my eyesight, to take away my ability to have certain functions, to see my kids grow up. I understand that. But I also understand who it is I'm making this prayer to.

I want eternity over the temporal. How about you? You. You cannot impress people with Jesus when you're trying to impress them with yourself.

There has to come a place where you step up to the line, you get inside the batter's box, and you say, you know what? It's not about me. It's about you. I'm gonna allow you to do what you wanna do.

I never have to question God's love for me. Why is that? Scripture says in Romans five, verse eight, but God demonstrates his own love toward us, and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Does God love me? Look at the cross.

I look at the cross, God loves me. I don't understand everything that's happening to me, but God loves me. You can argue till you're blue in the face, and you cannot convince me that God does not love me.

God loves me. And he died to set sinners free. And we have the opportunity to go into the highways and the byways to hear the same objections that are given over and over again.

Christ loved the church and gave himself for her. John 17, 23, that you've loved, allow them to see that you have loved them just as you have loved me. John 3, 16, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

Why doesn't God do away with the evil? Because he's given us a chance to repent. 2 Peter 3, 9 says the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness, but he's long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all shall come to repentance. It's not a matter, I don't have time, but it's not a matter of God's ability to do away with evil.

He's already set things in motion, if you would. He's got his plan. And he has chosen to use the foolishness of preaching to save some.

And unfortunately, we're so caught up saying, here am I, send him and her, that we fail to say, here am I, send me. So I'm asked a question I don't know when I'm open airing. Who cares? Say you don't know and move on.

Move on. So evil is something. Evil is not something, it's not something tangible.

And evil is an intruder. William Lane Craig, that middle knowledge individual had said concerning Bertrand Russell's argument, how can you talk about God when you're kneeling at the bed of a dying child? When Bertrand Russell said that, William Lane Craig responded recently in which he said, I'm curious, what is the atheist Bertrand Russell going to say when he's kneeling at the bed of a dying child? Sorry about that? Tough luck? Oh, well? Listen, Bertrand, you have nothing to say to a dying child. You have no explanation within your worldview to explain what's going on and why she's suffering.

But the Christian can kneel down right next to her and say, hey, there's hope. You weren't created for time which you're handcuffed to and which you're about ready to be set free with. Listen, you've been created for the glory of God, whether in life or whether in death.

May you glorify God in your death as hard as it may be, as real as your suffering is. And it's so simple that even a little girl can understand. And this is the message that we bring out to the streets.

Father, thank you for entrusting us with such a great, great word. Thank you for forgiving us of our sins, forgiving us that hope of heaven, but not just giving us fire insurance, giving us that ability to have fellowship with the creator of hair, of the sun, of the moon and the stars, the one who gives us the ability to enjoy a sunset. Thank you, God, that you saw nothing good inside of us when you saved us.

And you will keep us secure until that day, help us to go into the highways and the byways and to compel them to come. For your namesake, oh Lord. And it's with great confidence I know that I have what I have asked as I prayed according to your will.

Bless a feeble message. Even the points I weren't even able to strengthen this argument with. I pray that you would stir them up to dig deeper, to study, to be able to give an answer to everyone for that hope that lies within them.

In Jesus' name, amen. Thank you.

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