

# A Biblical, Theological and Practical Look at the Purpose of Evil

## Romans 8:28

### Gen 50:19–21

**Romans 8:28** And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

### Ge 50:19–21

- 19** Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God?
- 20** But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive.
- 21** Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

## Introduction

Did God decree the Holocaust?

Has God, from before the beginning of time, predestined the kidnapping of 200 Nigerian girls by Boko Haram?

Did God foreordain the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 by Russian trained rebels in the Ukraine?

Is the current Middle-Eastern chaos going according to God's eternal plan?

Are all of the kurdisch who are killed and enslaved and raped on a repeated basis by ISIS a part of the perfect plan God

Or more personally,

Has God decreed the situation in your marriage that is destroying your family?

Is your struggle with addictions and sin part of God's eternal plan?

Did he ordain the fall of Lucifer?

Did God foreknow and foreordain the disease that devastates your loved one?

What about the money that was unjustly taken from you?

Did God really "number the days" of your friend who took his or her own life?

Did God ordain the abduction and subsequent chaining to a tree of a little girl by a repeated sex offender.

Did God decree the earthquake that occurred in the ocean near

Southeast Asian and produced a Tsunami where more than 250,000 people are wiped off the planet

"For the atheist or agnostic, the natural explanation will suffice. Those who hold to a naturalistic and materialistic worldview will simply see any disaster "and evil" as one more meaningless event taking place in a meaningless universe.

As British philosopher Bryan Appleyard concluded,

“The simple truth is what it has always been: nature, uncontrolled, unbidden, unpredictable, can still humble our pride and wreck our schemes in an instant. We are a thin film of thought confined to a narrow band around an undistinguished planet orbiting a pretty average star.”

In other words, this is just one more accident taking place in an accidental world, observed by accidental human creatures.” (Albert Molher)

## **Who is is control of all of this**

You only have 4 options

1. No one is in control
2. You are in control
3. The Devil is in Control
4. God is in control

Some have said, well it is little bit of all of it. That is not possible, for if the smallest of things or events is out of control of any of these suggestions then none of them is in control.

Either you are in control or you are not.

Assuming that we believe that God is Control then the next logical question is.....

Why did God allow evil in the world?  
You could frame the question a number of ways.

If the Creator God is so good, why is there so much evil in the world?

This question was stated concisely by playwright Archibald MacLeish in his Pulitzer-prize winning play, J.B. Through his character Nickles, MacLeish poses the theological challenge: "If God is God, He is not good; if God is good, He is not God."

In fact, the reality of evil in the world is one of the favorite justifications of those who reject the God of the Bible.

They're eager to ask those questions in a myriad of different ways...

how can God be holy and allow His creation to be dominated by unholiness?

How can God be perfectly righteous and ordain the presence of unrighteousness?

There are a number of ways that this particular idea is effectively communicated. One is a syllogism, a series of logical steps such as the biblical God is loving...the biblical God is all-knowing, the biblical God is all powerful, yet massive evil exists in the world therefore the biblical God does not exist. That is to say that whoever allows this evil cannot be loving, or cannot be holy, or cannot be all powerful or all knowing and still allow evil.

In the minds of many, this backs Christians up into an impossible corner. There are many who see this as putting us, I guess you could say, at fourth and forty on our own ten-yard line. And our only option is to punt. And there are many Christians who would agree with that and they would grab **Deuteronomy 29:29, "The**

**secret things belong to the Lord,"** and punt that into the opposition's territory as far as they can. Is that the best we can do when pressed against our own theological end zone, is to punt **Deuteronomy 29:29**? Isn't there anything better than that in the divine play book? Isn't there some kind of long pass we can complete, something that will not only allow us to escape from defeat, but guarantee victory?

*We are going to fly high above the heavens into the majestic and Glorious presence of God in the first part of our journey as we discuss the Sovereignty of God and evil , and then we will descend to walk along the dirty, dusty and stone ridden road to take a glimpse at the Providence of God and evil*

The First will be more Theological  
The Second will be more practical and pastoral

So we will look at the existence and purpose of evil from two viewpoints.

1. Sovereignty
2. Providence

What is the difference in Sovereignty and Providence

Sovereignty is the fact that God is the Ruler of all and the only one who has the Right to Rule. He does as he pleases and always as he pleases and answers to no one.

He is called the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

He is God over all His Creation

## **Providence of God**

The word "providence" comes from the Latin providentia (Gk. pronoia [[provnoia](#)]) and means essentially foresight or making provision beforehand.

When applied to God the idea takes on a vastly larger dimension because God not only looks ahead and attempts to make provision for his goals, but infallibly accomplishes what he sets out to do. And because it is God's governance that is in view, it encompasses everything in the universe, from the creation of the world to its consummation, inclusive of every aspect of human existence and destiny. Providence, then, is the sovereign, divine superintendence of all things, guiding them toward their divinely predetermined end in a way that is consistent with their created nature, all to the glory and praise of God. This divine, sovereign, and benevolent control of all things by God is the underlying premise of everything that is taught in the Scriptures.

RC Sproul states

"The central point of the doctrine of providence is the stress on God's government of the universe. He rules His creation with absolute sovereignty and authority. He governs everything that comes to pass, from the greatest to the least. Nothing ever happens beyond the scope of His sovereign providential government. He makes the rain to fall and the sun to shine. He raises up kingdoms and brings them down. He numbers the hairs on our head and the days of our life."

In the words of R. C. Sproul, “God doesn’t roll dice.” Nothing happens by chance. Ever. **(The Invisible Hand Coming to Grips With God’s Providence)**

Providence is the means by which God carries out that Rule

To be sovereign is to determine to do something  
while Providence is how the thing is done

To be Sovereign is to be King  
while providence is how the king rules

This is why Charles Spurgeon, the London pastor from 100 years ago said,  
I believe that every particle of dust that dances in the sunbeam does not move an atom more or less than God wishes – that every particle of spray that dashes against the steamboat has its orbit, as well as the sun in the heavens – that the chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as the stars in their courses. The creeping of an aphid over the rosebud is as much fixed as the march of the devastating pestilence – the fall of . . . leaves from a poplar is as fully ordained as the tumbling of an avalanche.

When Spurgeon was challenged that this is nothing but fatalism and stoicism, he replied,

What is fate? Fate is this – *Whatever is, must be*. But there is a difference between that and Providence. Providence says, *Whatever God ordains, must be*; but the wisdom of God never ordains anything without a purpose. Everything in this world is working for some great end.

Fate does not say that. . . . There is (as much) difference between fate and Providence (as) there is between a man with good eyes and a blind man.

And this opens up to our thinking a whole category of theological truth that goes under the name of theodicy...theodicy...t-h-e-o-d-i-c-y, theodicy. It comes from two Greek words, *theos* meaning God, and *dikē* which is the root of the words that mean righteousness or righteous, or just, or justice. A theodicy is an explanation of how God can be just, or how God can be righteous. It is a defense of God's righteousness in the face of the presence of pervasive sin. And so I want to give you what I believe is a biblical theodicy, a biblical defense of why God who is holy, who is loving, who is all-knowing, who is all-powerful has allowed evil to dominate His creation?



# 1. Evil Exist

This is without serious argument. It is incontrovertible unless you are a Christian science advocate. It was Mary Baker Eddy Patterson Glover Frye...she had a problem with men...who basically developed what is called Christian Science. The teaching of Christian Science is this,  
 "All evil is an illusion. All sickness is an illusion. And even death is an illusion."

Christian Science is actually like Grape Nuts. If you've ever had Grape Nuts, I don't know why they named them that, they're not grapes and they're not nuts. And Christian Science is neither Christian nor scientific. But it sounds impressive.

The answer is not to play some ridiculous metaphysical game to say something doesn't exist that clearly does exist.

Evil exists. It exists apparently, manifestly, massively, dominantly in our world. And there are a number of categories in which evil exists. Let me give you a few.

## **There is natural evil.**

That is impersonal, external, physical, temporal evil in the form of diseases, disasters, catastrophes, the kinds of things that come from the physical world, the cursed creation from tiny bacteria to tidal waves, from viruses to volcanoes.

The whole natural world is blighted by bad things, things that make you sick, things that injure you, things that kill you. And humans since the Fall have lived at the mercy of the physical corruption.

All you have to do is go back to the book of Genesis and not long after the Fall comes the Flood which basically is a massive natural disaster ordained and authored and executed by God Himself which drowns the entire human race with the exception of eight people. There is natural evil beyond the Flood even to this

very day, rarely does a day go by when we don't hear of someone somewhere or some group somewhere or some massive amount of people somewhere dying in some kind of natural disaster, or some plague, or some illness sweeping through the lives of people. Natural evil.

## **Secondly, there's moral evil.**

Moral evil is personal as opposed to natural evil which is impersonal. It is internal, it is spiritual. It is wickedness, sin, transgression, iniquity, whatever term you want to use for it.

It is a bent, it is a disposition. It is an attitude, it is a course of thinking, speaking and conduct which dominates the human race so that Scripture says, "No one is good, not even one." Scripture says, "All the thoughts of the human heart are only evil continually." Scripture says that it is out of the heart that lust conceives and produces sin and from that sin comes death.

The Bible tells us that society is dominated by corruption. And it is not a disaster that kills us. A disaster may kill us, but if we miss all the disasters and all the diseases, we will still die because the waves of sin is death.

The corruption comes to every human being. It impacts every life, every relationship. All of humanity is made up of sinners, no one is exempt. And all the immoral sinners collide with each other in malfunctioning families and friendships and rivalries and associations and nations. The collision of wicked, selfish, immoral hearts fills the world with one disaster after another.

## **Thirdly there is supernatural evil**

This is the evil that is basically perpetrated by demons, fallen angels, the associates of Satan, the number of the angels that

fell from heaven with Satan as indicated in Revelation 12 to be a third of the angels, leaving two thirds remaining as holy angels, one third are fallen.

Satan is one of those and the whole world, **1 John 5:20** says, lies in the lap of the evil one.

These vile beings are as old as creation. They are unmitigatedly wicked. There is nothing in them that is good at all. There are ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of them. They ply their wickedness on an angelic level and also on a human level. It will get worse in the future when God casts them all into the earth in the future time of Tribulation. Satan who leads them is for this time given temporary authority over the world system. He has a temporary and delegated sovereignty in this world so that even as believers we are not wrestling against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness and authorities in high places that are wicked.

There is a massive, spiritual struggle going on in this world system effected by demons. They have the power to seduce and deceive humanity against God and against the gospel and against Scripture and to draw them deeper and deeper and deeper into immorality and iniquity.

## **Last eternal evil..**

. In a word, hell...hell. People who go to hell, the majority of the human race, will be forever evil...forever evil. The worse of evil will be gathered in one place..... all the demons and the devil and all the ones that reject Jesus Christ will be gathered in one place, the Lake of fire.

The worm will not die. The fire will not be quenched. The remorse will not end. The judgment will not cease. The punishment will not be mitigated. It is unrestrained and unmitigated evil and a fully informed accusing conscience.

Yes there is evil. And there is not marginal evil and there is not minimal evil, there is pervasive, dominant evil.

And I guess you could say that evil has a kind of secondary dominance in the whole of creation. It effects everything. It effects the natural creation, the supernatural creation and the human and personal creation.

## 2. God Exists.

And only one God exists and He is the God revealed in Scripture, the one, true and only living God, the God of the Bible. And He is exactly the God that Scripture says He is, since the Bible is His self revelation. He is as the Revelation of Scripture describes Him. He is all-powerful, He is all-knowing, He is loving, and He is absolutely holy. Yes He is holy. Yes He is loving. Yes He is omnipotent, that is all-powerful and omniscient, all-knowing. He controls absolutely everything.

The Bible tells us that God exists and that nothing exists that He does not ordain. Nothing occurs that He does not ordain. Everything is designed by, ordained by, and controlled by God. That is the biblical testimony. Let me remind you of it.

**First Chronicles 29:11 and 12.** "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty. For all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine. Thine is the Kingdom, O Lord. Thou art exalted as head above all. Thou reignest over all and in Thine hand is power and might and in Thine hand is to make great to give strength unto all."

**Psalms 115:3,** "Our God is in the heavens, He has done whatever He pleased."

**Daniel 4:35**, "He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, 'What are you doing?'"

Scripture repeatedly affirms the sovereignty of God over everything. God's sovereignty is absolute, irresistible and infinite.

When we say that God is sovereign, we simply mean He has a right to be in charge of absolutely everything because He, in fact, is in charge of absolutely everything.

That is why **1 Timothy 6:15** says, "He is the only potentate, or ruler. He is the only sovereign, the only monarch."

In **Revelation 4:11** we read, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for You have created all things and for Your pleasure they are and were created." "All things" is the operative phrase. Everything fits into God's pleasure. Everything is to please God.

**Proverbs 16:4**, "The Lord has made all things for Himself, even the wicked for the day of evil." Even the wicked for the day of evil.

**Deuteronomy 32:39**. "See now that I, I am He...says God...and there is no God beside Me, it is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded. It is I who heal and there is no one who can deliver from My hand."

**Exodus 4:11**, "The Lord said to Moses, 'Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I the Lord?'"

Or **Psalms 105:16**, "He called for a famine upon the land."

Or **2 Kings 17:25**, "They did not fear the Lord, therefore the Lord sent lions which killed some of them."

Scripture is very clear that God is behind what we would classify as good things and what we would classify as evil things, or bad things. God created out of His own free choice, uninfluenced, God created everything that is, ordained everything that is.

And in **2 Samuel 10:12** it says, "The Lord does what seems to Him good." The Lord does what seems to Him good.

**Psalms 33:9** to 11. "He spoke and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast. The Lord brings the counsel of the heathen to naught, He makes the devices of the people of no effect. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations."

Or **Psalms 103:19**, "The Lord has prepared His throne in the heavens. His Kingdom rules over all."

Or **Isaiah 14:27**, "The Lord of host has purposed and who shall disannul it? His hand is stretched out, who shall turn it back?"

Or **Isaiah 46:9** and **10**, "Remember the former things of old, for I am God, there is none else, I am God. There is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times to things that are not yet done, saying My counsel shall stand, I will do all My pleasure."

**First Samuel 2:6** to 8, "The Lord kills and makes alive. He brings down to the grave, and brings up. He makes poor and makes rich. He brings low and lifts up."

Or **Amos 3:6**, "If there is a calamity in the city, will not the Lord have done it?"

God controls absolutely everything. There is no evil outside His plan. There is no evil outside His purpose. He knows everything

that can be known, that is knowable. He has comprehensive power to do everything that can be done that is possible. That is what the Bible says about God. And in that perfect knowledge, and in that perfect power, and with perfect holiness, and expressing His perfect love, God ordains everything.

That leads us to a third conclusion. Evil exists, God exists, and this is the only God who exists, thirdly, God wills evil to exist. God wills evil to exist. It is inescapable.

So where did evil originate? Evil originated where? In heaven? Yes, evil originated in heaven in an angelic rebellion right under the nose of God. You think that was a shock? Then you don't have a God who is absolutely omniscient. You think God couldn't stop it once it got going? Couldn't put an end to it right on the spot? Then you have a God who is not all powerful. No matter how you deal with it, if you sustain the biblical doctrine of God, God becomes ultimately responsible for the existence of evil.

You remember Rabbi Kushner in the book **“When Bad Things Happen to Good People”**

A lot of things wrong with that book. The thing that's wrong with the title is there are no good people. But let's grant him his title, When Bad Things Happen To Good People. What he does is reinvent God. He reinvents God.

God doesn't have the knowledge and God doesn't have the power. So let's not hold Him responsible for what He doesn't know and can't deal with.

One writer, Ledonitz, looked at this problem and said, “God created the best of all worlds that He could make, He couldn't do any better.”

Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism other sort of ancient philosophies said,

"God had to deal with two co-eternal and independent realities good and evil...co-eternal, independent, that is always existing.

## 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

### Chapter 3: Of God's Decree

1. \_\_\_\_\_ God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, **all things, whatsoever comes to pass**; yet so as thereby is God **neither the author of sin** nor hath fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established;

By the decree of God, **for the manifestation of his glory**, some men and angels are predestinated, or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ, **to the praise of his glorious grace**; others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, **to the praise of his glorious justice**.

**D A Carson wrote**



**1. God is absolutely sovereign, but his sovereignty never functions in such a way that human responsibility is curtailed, minimized, or mitigated.**

**2. Human beings are morally responsible creatures — they significantly choose, rebel, obey, believe, defy, make decisions, and so forth, and they are rightly held accountable for such actions;**

## **The Biblical Reason for the Existence of Evil**

### **1. Romans 3:5**

**5** But if our unrighteousness **demonstrates** the righteousness of God, what shall we say?

#### **demonstrates**

**Original Word:** συνίστημι, συνιστάνω

**Transliteration:** sunistémi and sunistanó

**Phonetic Spelling:** (soon-is-tah'-o)

**Short Definition:** I **commend, prove**, am composed of, cohere

**Definition:** I place together, **commend, prove, exhibit**; intrans: I stand with; I am composed of, cohere.

**4921** *synistáō* (from **4862** /*sýn*, "union, together *with*" and **2476** /*hístēmi*, "to stand") – properly, "stand together," referring to facts "lining up" with each other to *support (commend)* something.

### **2. Romans 5:8**

**8** But God **demonstrates** His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

we would not have known the depth of His Love had we not been sinners in need of forgiveness

### 3. Romans 9:22-23

**22** What if God, wanting **to show** *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,

**23** and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,

### to show

**endeiknumi: to indicate (by word or act), to prove**

**Original Word:** ἐνδείκνυμι

**Part of Speech:** Verb

**Transliteration:** endeiknumi

**Phonetic Spelling:** (en-dike'-noo-mee)

**Short Definition:** I show forth

**Definition:** I show forth, prove.

**1731** *endeíknymi* (from **1722** /en "in," which intensifies **1166** /deiknýō, "show") – **properly, to make fully evident, showing conspicuous proof which demonstrates something as undeniable.** The prefix **1722** (en)

adds the dimension of "abiding *condition*" making the "showing forth" on "open display" for all to see, i.e. **obvious so "no one could miss it."** **1731 /endeíknymi ("undeniably display") always occurs in the Greek middle voice which underlines the high level of personal interest shown by the one making something very evident.**

[Such displaying then is always *done with high personal involvement* and sense of advantage.]

## **known**

**gnórizó: to come to know, to make known**

**Original Word:** γνωρίζω

**Part of Speech:** Verb

**Transliteration:** gnórizó

**Phonetic Spelling:** (gno-rid'-zo)

**Short Definition:** I make known, declare, know

**Definition:** I make known, declare, know, discover

## **John Piper wrote**

But when a person settles it Biblically, intellectually and emotionally, that God has ultimate control of all things, including evil, and that this is gracious and precious beyond words, then a marvelous stability and depth come into that person's life and they develop a "God-centered" world view." When a person believes, with the Heidelberg Catechism (Question 27), that "The almighty and everywhere present power of God . . . upholds heaven and earth, with all creatures, and so governs them that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren

years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, all things, come not by chance, but by his fatherly hand” – when a person believes and cherishes that truth, they have the key to a God-“centered” world view.

Joseph Franks

Friends, it may be confusing why God does what he does, but it should not be confusing that God does what he does. He is not the author of sin. He does not delight in sin. He promises to judge those who commit such sins. (Read Isaiah 37:28-29 printed below) However even the most vile of sins find their place within the eternal decree of the Good and Great God.

So do not be blasphemous and deny the goodness or the greatness of God. And do not be depressed and hopeless thinking this world has gone haywire. And do not become bitter by failing to worship God in the midst of your horror. And do not think, for one moment, that those who commit wicked deeds will get by with their sin. Instead, humbly and confidently, submit to God’s plan in prayer. Fight for righteousness, and show compassion on those who are being buffeted by God’s strange but wise plan. And do all this while keeping your eye on the prize — Jesus and life eternal...