

Monday Morning Rewind – January 12, 2009

Good morning! On Sabbath, we continued our series by asking the question, “Is God an Underachiever?” Earthquakes, tsunamis, terrorist attacks, wars, child abductions and murders—are evidences of a planet out of control. If there is a God, many reason, He must be an underachiever, because it appears He is powerless to do anything to stop evil and the suffering it causes. At the very least, He’s not the all-powerful, all-loving God described in the Bible.

But as we discovered, both the existence and eradication of evil is consistent with a God who is all love. To review, 1) God did not create evil, but He did create choice. “God is love” (1 John 4:8), and He created the world in love for the purpose of love. But love must be chosen. It cannot be coerced or programmed. God presented Adam with the choice to stay in loving fellowship with Himself or choose independence in the form of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

In addition to all 122 anthropic constants (fine-tuned laws of nature that sustain human life), the most important one is that God Himself is the source of all life and happiness. To separate from the source of life brings death. Independence from God violates the anthropic constant that sustains life.

Adam and Eve listened to the enemy and chose independence, which brought sin and suffering into the world.

But not all suffering is chosen. What about natural disasters and disease? Rewind to Gen. 3:17, 18; Rom. 8:20-22; Isa. 24:4-6 to see how the curse of sin extends to the creation.

2) An omnipotent God is limited by the free will of His creatures. The God of the Bible is not like the gods of Greek Mythology. He does not force compliance. Luke 13:34 and Matt. 13:58 are two examples of the limitations of omnipotence.

It is also important to remember that part of having all power includes the power to not use it all. Jesus could have come down from the cross, but He didn’t.

The demand for an Omnipotent God to use the full measure of His omnipotence to instantly remove evil from the world is just another way to putting God to the test. Suffering continues, in part, because God is not willing for any to perish—eternally. (See 2 Peter 3:9.)

3) An all-loving God didn’t create evil, but He takes responsibility for it. As soon as sin entered the world through man’s choice for independence from God, The Creator accepted responsibility and made Himself the bridge that sinners could cross to find their way back to Life.

God, in Jesus Christ, not only weeps for the results of sin in the world, He saves as well. “Which is easier,” Jesus said to the skeptical religious leaders of his day, “to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven, or to say, ‘Get up and walk?’” (Luke 5:23). It was not a hard thing for the Life Giver to say “Get up and walk.” To provide a temporary miracle of healing took just a word; to provide the permanent miracle of grace to forgive the sins of humanity took His life.

God is not an underachiever. Anybody—any underachiever can cut and run. My God is an *overachiever*. He did do something—something that still preserves our freedom of choice and His freedom to love. He died in our place, and in so doing, He creates a new anthropic constant—a new law—that is stronger than the law of sin and death. It’s called the “Law of Grace” (Eph. 2:8).

And this grace comes to us by the cross of Calvary. That’s a Jesus who does more than cry. That’s a God I can cry out to in my distress, because I know He has done, and is doing something about it.

As long as we live here, we live on a broken planet. We cannot escape the realities of brokenness in this life. But because of the law of grace, the brokenness we experience is temporary, and if we choose it, life as God intended, and as He Himself lives it, is permanently and eternally ours. –

Pastor Randy

p.s. Join us Wednesday night at 7:00 PM to continue the conversation on this week’s topic of the problem of suffering. Next Sabbath’s topic: “The Cross Doesn’t Make Sense (But I’d be lost without it).” Tell a friend.