CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALS PART II:

WHY WE BELIEVE

CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALS:

Remaining Schedule

5/25/21: What about other religions? / Is Christian experience valid?

6/1/21: How to defend our faith with non-believers.

1. Why does God allow suffering and evil in the world?
2. The Big Question
3. God’s Role in Our Suffering
4. The most pressing question of not just our time but any time remains how a good God could allow suffering and evil in the world, it is even more pressing than the other questions we have discussed in the last month.
5. In the book, *Why Bad Things Happen to Good* Peoplewritten by Rabbi Harold Kushner, he essentially argues that God is all good, but not all powerful.
6. The author, Paul Little, points out this dilemma:
7. Evil and suffering exist in the world.
8. God is either all good but not all powerful
9. Or God is all powerful, but not all good.
10. The biblical concept of God is that He is all good, and is all powerful, even as He allows evil and suffering to exist for a time.
11. Human Beings not Robots
12. Everything God created was called good, and there was no death or suffering in the beginning. Adam & Eve were created as not perfect but having the potential to obey or disobey God.
13. If Adam and Eve had obeyed God, they would have enjoyed unending blissful fellowship with God and enjoyment of Him and His creation.
14. Since their decision, every one of us followed the spiritual pattern choosing to rebel against our Creator and as a result, sin has spread (See Romans 5:12)
15. Scripture tells us in Romans 8 that nature itself has been cursed because of sin.
16. It is people who are responsible for sin, not God.
17. God could have made us so that we could not sin, but then we would no longer be human beings, we would be puppets on a string.
18. God is Love according to *1 John 4:8,* and He desires for us to voluntarily choose to love him, for that to be possible, free will and the potential for evil must have been allowed to exist.

“God apparently thought it was worth the risk of creating us as we are, and this is the reality we face.” -Author Paul Little

1. Couldn’t God just stamp out evil?
2. According to *Lamentations 3:22, “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.”*
3. If God were to decide to eliminate all evil in the world today, where would the line be drawn? Inevitable, none of us would be left.
4. The sin of Adam and Eve which has been passed down to all of us separates us from being able to have a close relationship with God.
5. The perfect holiness of God could allow for no less than total separation, and it is the direct result and consequences of our actions.
6. God has made it possible to escape His inevitable judgement on sin and evil through the sacrificial death of His Son on the cross.
7. A time is coming when God will stamp out evil in the world completely. The devil and all his works and workers will come under eternal judgement.

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1. Exact Reward Concept
2. Karma is the ‘law’ of the consequence of past actions and or a past life. Blindness, poverty, hunger, physical deformity, isolation, and other social agonies are all the outworking of punishment for evil deeds in a previous existence. Therefore, suffering is simply the result of past evil doing.
3. Does biblical Christianity believe suffering is a punishment from God? It is clear from the teaching of both the Old and New Testaments that suffering may be the judgement of God, but there are many instances when it is totally unrelated to personal wrongdoing.
4. The classic treatment of the problem of suffering and evil in the book of Job shows how people in biblical times held this way of thinking. We see Job’s friends assume that Job’s suffering was directly the result of personal moral failures. Imagine how this compounded Job’s pain.
5. We see this thinking with the attitude of the disciples when Jesus is confronted with a blind man. They asked if he was blind from birth because he had sinned, or his parents had sinned. Jesus answers that neither sinned, and that *“this happened that the work of God might be displayed in his life.” (John 9:1-3)*.
6. When Jesus got word that people who suffered tragedies such as the tower of Siloam falling and killing eighteen people, he would always be sure to say, *“Do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:4-5)*.
7. Biblical examples show that if someone’s suffering and pain is directly tied to their own specific sin, Jesus always makes that clear to them.

1. What about Hell and the Devil?
2. A major pattern in Scripture is that the judgement of God is always preceded by warning. God always pleads and warns before, and only after warning is persistently ignored and rejected does judgment come.
3. God makes it clear that He takes no pleasure in bringing judgement (see *Ezekiel 33:11).*
4. God has delayed the return of Jesus Christ so that everyone can come to repentance (*2 Peter 3:9).*
5. God has done all that is necessary for us to be forgiven, redeemed, cleansed, and reconciled to Himself.
6. When people question how a loving God can send anyone to hell, it should be pointed out that in reality, in a sense, God sends no one to hell. We send ourselves there. If we refuse and reject God’s offer of salvation, God gives us over to our choice.
7. We are told in the Bible that there is an “enemy”, the devil, who finds great pleasure in ruining God’s creation, and causing misery and suffering in people. Most of all, Satan wants to keep us blinded from the truth of the Gospel.
8. God allows Satan limited power, but only to a point, and always ultimately, to further God’s ends.
9. We have in Christ authority and power to overcome the enemy. *“Greater is He who is in us, then he who is in the world.” (1 John 4:4).*

“For the person who does not want to be with God, even heaven would be hell.”- Paul Little

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1. God Feels Our Suffering
2. God is not distant, impervious, and far removed from his people and their sufferings. He not only is aware of suffering-He feels it.
3. However greatly we may suffer, it is well to remember that God is the great sufferer.
4. The Shortest Verse in the Bible and what it tells us about God’s relation to our suffering.
5. Jesus suffered more than anyone who has ever lived (see *Hebrews 2:10).*
6. God uses suffering for our good
7. God allows suffering to discipline us (*Hebrews 12:3-11).*
8. God allows suffering to refine our faith (*1 Peter 1:6-7).*
9. God allows suffering to perfect our character (*Romans 5:2-5).*
10. God allows suffering to accomplish His purposes (*Job 42:2, Genesis 50:20).*
11. What our response should be in the face of suffering (*1 Peter 4:19).*

*“And we know that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.”- Romans 8:28*

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