WHY DOES GOD ALLOW EVIL?

By Fr. Dave Heney

During WWII, around six million Jews were killed by the Nazis in an immensely evil event called The Holocaust. Sadly, there have been other similar events in the 20th century, such as atheist Communist Chinese and Russian executions where over 100 million died. How can we understand a loving God allowing these and other evil events in our world today?

We know there has been a lot of sin in the world since Adam and Eve. Their sin was selfishness, which is the very opposite of love, which always seeks the authentic good of others. Selfishness seeks only our own good.

It is no accident that the Bible records the very next sin is the murder of Abel by his brother Cain. Selfishness, if left unchecked, can lead to murder, and eventually to our violent 20th Century.

What is God's answer?

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God is love, and He only wants us to *freely* love Him and each other. *That means there is no love without freedom.* That is the key idea. Love cannot be forced. It must be a free gift of yourself to seek and provide the authentic good of another.

We must take this freedom seriously. If God ever directly stopped bad human behavior, that would interfere with your free choices. No choice means no freedom …which means no love. It would also decisively prove His existence. You would have no choice then but to believe in Him. Your relationship would not be love …but simple cold logic.

Since God is love, and love requires freedom, God cannot act against His own nature and take away your freedom to choose since that would actually be unloving of you. God therefore **can't** stop evil, and must allow people their freedom to choose good or bad behavior.

However, God does not leave you alone. As the scriptures affirm, God sent prophets and messages of love from the very beginning, and of course, sent Our Lord Jesus Christ. His final words before His ascension were, "*I am with you …always!*"

God has given us everything we need to live with justice, peace, and love despite living in a sinful world. However, you have to freely accept it. God will never force it on you.

You can freely choose to love …no matter what others may do, and choose to never let another's lack of faith, hope, and love affect your faith, hope and love. You may not change the world, but you can certainly have a positive impact in your personal world of family and friends.

Years ago I visited the Dachau Nazi Concentration Camp in Germany, preserved as a reminder of great evil but also the *worldwide* fight of nations to end it. In the face of evil, God inspires good people with deep compassion and courage to stop it. This immense *compassion* for victims of violence and heroic *courage t*o stop bad people is the legacy of 2,000 years of Christianity and the power of God's love to change hearts. *Stopping evil is our task …with the help of God.*

This affirms there are many saints and heroes too. Compassion and courage build societies on law and order, along with schools, hospitals, and prosperous economies. It is good to know this more accurate view of history. Many more people have freely accepted Our Lord's grace, peace, and love than those who have not, and maintain their faith, hope, and love no matter what others may do. It is sad that bad events often get more attention than heroic and inspiring ones. We should remember in history how often good triumphs over evil. God's love is a powerful force for good, and that is very good news!

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