

Program: SS Panel 2025 1 Q

Quarterly title: God's Love and Justice

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Lesson Title: #7 The Problem of Evil

For Lesson Dates: February 8-14, 2025

Section title: Wednesday - The Freewill Defense

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Question:

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Lesson 7

February 8-14

## The Problem of Evil

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### SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Job 30:26; Matt.27:46; Job 38:1–12; Psalm 73; Gen. 2:16, 17; Rev. 21:3, 4.

Memory Text: " 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the

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WEDNESDAY

February 12

## The Freewill Defense

However much we don't understand of God's ways and thoughts, Scripture does reveal some things that help to address the problem of evil. One avenue for addressing the logical problem of evil is known as the freewill defense.

\*\*\*READ\*\*\*

**The freewill defense is the view that evil is the result of the misuse of creaturely free will. God, then, is not to blame for evil, because evil is the result of creatures misusing the free will that God has given us for good reasons.** Why, however, would God give such free will?— In this regard, C. S. Lewis once wrote that “free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata—of creatures that worked like machines—would hardly be worth creating. The happiness which God designs for His higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other. . . . And for that they must be free.” —*Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan, 1960), p. 52.

**]]>** one of the wonderful gifts that God has given to the human race is the ability to choose. In other words, “free will”. You can choose to eat a peach or you can choose to eat an apple, you can choose to eat grapes or you can choose to eat blueberries. You can choose to do good or you can choose to do evil. If you choose to do good you have good results, you will have benefit. If you choose to do evil there will be consequences that are not good. You will suffer or you and someone else will suffer.

We have a choice

**Luk 9:23** And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

\*\*\*READ\*\*\*

The government of God is not, as Satan would make it appear, founded upon a blind submission, an unreasoning control. It appeals to the intellect and the conscience. "Come now, and let us reason together" is the Creator's invitation to the beings He has made. Isaiah 1:18. God does not force the will of His creatures. He cannot accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. A mere forced submission would prevent all real development of mind or character; it would make man a mere **automaton**. Such is not the purpose of the Creator. He desires that man, the crowning work of His creative power, shall reach the highest possible development. He sets before us the height of blessing to which He desires to bring us through His grace. He invites us to give ourselves to Him, that He may work His will in us. It remains for us to choose whether we will be set free from the bondage of sin, to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God. SC 43.4

**Read Genesis 2:16, 17. How do these verses display the moral freedom granted to Adam and Eve?**

**Genesis 2:16, 17.** 6 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;

17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

>> it is clear from the book of Genesis that one of the gifts that God gave to Adam and eve, and to us, is free will. But notice that before God commanded Adam & Eve not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, He told them, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die. God was very clear about the consequences. And of course they could have the freedom to choose to do good or to do evil. You and I also have the freedom to choose to do good or to do evil. I encourage you that by the grace of God that you will choose to do good. Why?, because it is clear from the Bible and our personal experiences that to freely choose to do evil brings bad results and unnecessary suffering.

\*\*\*READ\*\*\*

Why command them unless they had free will to begin with? **Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit**, and since then our planet has been filled with evil. In Genesis 4, the next chapter after the Fall narrative, the terrible consequences of sin are seen in the murder of Abel by his brother. The narrative of the Fall shows how the misuse of Adam and Eve's free will brought sin and evil into the history of our planet.

All through Scripture, we see the reality of free moral will. (See *Deut. 7:12, 13; Josh. 24:14, 15; Ps. 81:11–14; and Isa. 66:4.*) Every day of our lives, to one degree or another, we ourselves exercise the free will given to us by our Creator. Without free will, we would not be recognizably human. We would be more like a machine, or even a mindless robot.

**If you keep, God will keep**

**Deuteronomy 7:12, 13 12** “Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers.

**13** And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flock, in the land of which He swore to your fathers to give you.

**choose for yourselves this day**

**Joshua 24:14, 15 14** “Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord!

**15** And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, **choose for yourselves this day** whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of [the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Sinners are such by their own deliberate choice

**Jhn 3:19** And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

**Jhn 3:20** For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

**Psalms 81:11–14** 11 “But My people would not heed My voice, And Israel would have none of Me.

12 So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, To walk in their own counsels.

13 “Oh, that My people would listen to Me, **That Israel would walk in My ways!**

14 I would soon subdue their enemies, And turn My hand against their adversaries.

**Isaiah 66:4** So will I choose their delusions, And bring their fears on them; Because, when I called, no one answered, When I spoke they did not hear; But they did evil before My eyes, And chose *that* in which I do not delight.”

Sony Corporation has created a robot dog, called Aibo. It will not get sick, not get fleas, not bite, not need shots, and not shed fur. Would you trade your flesh and blood dog for an Aibo? If not, how might your choice help you better understand why God created us as He did, with free will—despite the risks?

**1Ki 18:21** And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD *be* God, follow him: but if Baal, *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

**John 6:67** (KJV) 67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

Choice

Rev. 3:20