

“A Good God Wouldn’t Allow Suffering” (Psalm 22; page 457)

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Ps 22:1)

A. The Secular Argument

1. If God is all-powerful, He *could* stop evil and suffering
2. If God is all-good, He *would* stop evil and suffering
3. Evil and suffering continue
4. Therefore no such God exists

B. The Christian Response

1. Evil is a meaningless construct if there is no God or absolutes
2. Evil, which entered the world through Adam’s disobedience, resulted in creation’s curse and great suffering
3. Since God is all-powerful and all-good, He *can* and *will* stop evil and suffering
4. God has already begun to conquer evil and redeem suffering

C. A Test Case: Psalm 22:

1. **Cry of Complaint (1-11)**
2. **Mockers & Murderers (12-18)**
3. **Cry for Deliverance (19-21)**
4. **Praise & Call to Prayer (22-31)**

David's and Jesus' Sufferings Compared & Contrasted

| Psalm 22 / David | Jesus, Son of David | Notes |
|---|--|---|
| v18: They divide my clothing among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. | John 19:23-24: When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts... But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." | Clothing divided, lots cast |
| v16: For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and my feet... | John 19:15: So they took Jesus and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him... | Wicked men crucify him |
| v7: All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads. | Matt 27:39: And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads... | Mock & wag their heads |
| v8: "He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!" | Matt 27:43: "He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him." | Mock his trust in divine rescue |
| v19,20: But you, O LORD, do not be far off!... Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog! Save me from the mouth of the lion! | Matt 26:39: And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." | Plea for rescue, deliverance |
| v1: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" | Mark 15:34: And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" | Cry of abandonment |
| v21: You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen! 22:24: For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him. | Luke 23:46: Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. | David is finally heard & rescued. Jesus is forsaken & dies. |
| v31: they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it. | John 19:30: Jesus...said... "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. | David: future generations will declare God vindicated. Jesus: "it is finished" |

Principles & Applications:

1. Acknowledge and lament the reality of evil and suffering, like Scripture, Jesus and God do
2. Recognize that our sinful acts have unintended consequences and perpetuate suffering (Ro 5:12)
3. While suffering ultimately springs from sin (Adam's and humanity's choice), much suffering is inexplicable (Psalm 22:1). So don't try and connect all the dots (Job 42:1-6).
4. We may not know why, but we know Who:
 - a. God is love (1 John 4:8)
 - b. God so loved the world that He gave us His only Son (John 3:16)
5. God, through Christ's death and resurrection, used evil and suffering to defeat evil and suffering (Acts 2:22-23; 3:14-21)
6. Because of Jesus, we look forward to and proclaim the restoration of all things (Rev 21:1-6)

7. In the meantime, we work to be agents of good to alleviate suffering (Galatians 6:10).