

Why Does Evil Exist?

Brandon Phillips / General

The King and His Glory / Prayer / Matthew 6:9–13

In Matt 6:9-13, Jesus teaches His disciples the proper, God-honoring, and worshipful way to pray.

Pre-sermon Comments

Discussion Questions

Opening Reflection: Pastor Brandon began by expressing gratitude for gathering with the body of Christ. How has gathering with fellow believers been a source of encouragement or growth in your own life?

Engaging with Current Events: Pastor Brandon mentioned feeling torn between addressing the election and returning to theological discussions. How can we balance engaging with cultural or political issues while maintaining a focus on sound doctrine in our daily lives?

The Doctrines of Grace - Total Depravity: Pastor Brandon highlighted the doctrine of total depravity or total inability. How does understanding our total inability to seek God without His grace shape our view of salvation and the Christian life?

Future Theological Topics: Pastor Brandon outlined upcoming podcast episodes covering the five points of Calvinism (TULIP) and the five solas. Why are these doctrines central to a biblical worldview, and how do they impact our understanding of faith and salvation?

Sermon Text

[Matthew 6:13](#) (LSB) ¹³ ‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]’

Introduction

Theodicy involves a vindication of God’s justice against the charge that the presence of evil in creation shows him to be unjust, impotent, both, or nonexistent. Theodicy declares that God is all-powerful and all-good even though this might not seem to be the case since evil exists in the creation. ~ **John F. MacArthur; Richard Mayhue**

Since the ultimate theodicy is future, we must now deal with the problem of evil by faith. ~ **John Frame**

Discussion Questions:

Theodicy - Addressing the Problem of Evil: Pastor Brandon introduced the topic of theodicy, or a defense of God's justice in the face of evil. Why is it important for Christians to wrestle with the question of why evil exists, and how does it affect our faith and trust in God's goodness?

Faith in the Face of Mystery: John Frame was quoted, saying that the ultimate answer to the problem of evil will be revealed in eternity, requiring us to trust by faith in the present. How do you personally navigate moments when God’s ways seem difficult to understand?

Scripture and Faith: Pastor Brandon emphasized that scripture provides the answer, but the answer is a matter of faith. How can we strengthen our faith in God’s justice and goodness when faced with evil and suffering in the world?

Review

Pray, then, in this way

[Matthew 6:9](#) (LSB) ⁹ “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

Passage Outline

- **God’s Power and Sovereignty** ([Matt 6:9-10](#))
- **God’s Provision and Security** ([Matt 6:11-13](#))

Sermon Outline

In this sermon, we will consider from Scripture three propositional truths about God’s relationship with evil. God’s Word assures us that God is/has an/is not the:

- **Absolutely Sovereign over Evil!**
- **Astounding Purpose For Evil!**
- **Author of Evil!**

Evil Exists and Abounds

Christian Science is actually like Grape Nuts. They’re not grapes and they’re not nuts. And Christian Science is neither Christian nor scientific. But it sounds impressive.

Categories of Evil

Supernatural Evil

[Ephesians 6:12](#) (LSB) ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

[Revelation 12:9–10](#) (LSB) ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. ¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “**Now** the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.

[1 John 5:19](#) (LSB) ¹⁹ We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in *the power of* the evil one.

[Ephesians 2:1–2](#) (LSB) ¹ And you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience,

[Genesis 3:15](#) (LSB) ¹⁵ And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”

[1 Peter 5:8](#) (LSB) ⁸ Be of sober *spirit*, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

The demons have the power to seduce and deceive humanity against God and against the gospel and against Scripture and to draw them deeper and deeper and deeper into immorality and iniquity.

Natural Evil

[Romans 8:20](#) (LSB) ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope

[Genesis 3:6](#) (LSB) ⁶ Then the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, so she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

[Genesis 3:17–19](#) (LSB) ¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded

you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In pain you will eat of it All the days of your life. ¹⁸ "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

[Genesis 3:23–24](#) (LSB) ²³ therefore Yahweh God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

Moral Evil

[Romans 3:10](#) (LSB) ¹⁰ as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

[Jeremiah 17:9](#) (LSB) ⁹ "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can know it?

[Genesis 2:16–17](#) (LSB) ¹⁶ And Yahweh God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may surely eat; ¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat from it; for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

[Romans 3:23](#) (LSB) ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

[Romans 5:12](#) (LSB) ¹² Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

[Romans 6:23](#) (LSB) ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[Isaiah 64:6](#) (LSB) ⁶ For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, carry us away.

Eternal Evil

[Mark 9:48](#) (LSB) ⁴⁸ where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.

Evil does not proliferate

[Genesis 6:5](#) (LSB) ⁵ Then Yahweh saw that the evil of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

[2 Thessalonians 2:11](#) (LSB) ¹¹ And for this reason God sends upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,

[2 Timothy 3:1](#) (LSB) ¹ But know this, that in the last days difficult times will come.

God has restrained evil in four powerful ways

Humans are personally restrained through the human conscience

The source of your conscience

[Romans 2:9](#) (LSB) ⁹ *There will be* affliction and turmoil for every soul of man who works out evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek,

[Romans 2:10–11](#) (LSB) ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace to everyone who works good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹ For there is no partiality with God.

[Romans 2:12](#) (LSB) ¹² For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law.

[Romans 2:13](#) (LSB) ¹³ For *it is* not the hearers of the Law *who* are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

[James 1:22](#) (LSB) ²² But become doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

[Romans 2:14–16](#) (LSB) ¹⁴ For when Gentiles who do not have the Law naturally do the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ in that they demonstrate the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, ¹⁶ on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

You can sear your conscience

[1 Timothy 4:1-3](#) (LSB) ¹ But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, ² by the hypocrisy of liars, who have been seared in their own conscience, ³ who forbid marriage *and advocate* abstaining from foods which God created to be shared in with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

You can also create a twisted morality

[Isaiah 5:20](#) (LSB) ²⁰ Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness, Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

How do we respond as Christians?

[1 Timothy 1:5](#) (LSB) ⁵ But the goal of our command is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and an unhypocritical faith.

The Civil Government restrains evil

The Noahic Covenant established the principle of human government

[Genesis 4:15](#) (LSB) ¹⁵ So Yahweh said to him, “Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold.” And Yahweh appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one who found him would strike him.

[Genesis 4:24](#) (LSB) ²⁴ If Cain is avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.”

[Genesis 9:6](#) (LSB) ⁶ “Whoever sheds man’s blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.

The New Testament Legitimizes the Role of Government

[Matthew 22:16](#) (LSB) ¹⁶ And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any.

[Matthew 22:17-22](#) (LSB) ¹⁷ “Therefore, tell us, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a tax to Caesar, or not?” ¹⁸ But Jesus, knowing their wickedness, said,

“Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites?”¹⁹ “Show Me the coin *used* for the tax.” And they brought Him a denarius.²⁰ And He said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?”²¹ They said to Him, “Caesar’s.” Then He said to them, “Therefore, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s.”²² And hearing *this*, they marveled, and leaving Him, they went away.

[Romans 13:1-7](#) (LSB) ¹ Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist have been appointed by God.

² Therefore whoever resists that authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

³ For rulers are not *a cause of* fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of that authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same; ⁴ for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword in vain, for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

⁵ Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of that wrath, but also because of conscience.

⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for *rulers* are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. ⁷ Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

[John 18:11-12](#) (LSB) ¹¹ So Jesus said to Peter, “Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?” ¹² So the *Roman* cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him,

[1 Peter 2:13-17](#) (LSB) ¹³ Be subject for the sake of the Lord to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do good.

¹⁵ For such is the will of God that by doing good you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. ¹⁶ Act as free people, and do not use your freedom as a covering

for evil, but *use it* as slaves of God.¹⁷ Honor all people, love the brethren, fear God, honor the king.

Humans are relationally restrained by the family

Family is God's Idea

[Genesis 1:26–28](#) (LSB)²⁶ Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, so that they will have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”²⁷ And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that creeps on the earth.”

John MacArthur: The family becomes the divinely-given institution for the formation of restrained sinners, who by multi-generational morality and wisdom with instruction and discipline in love develop into good citizens who benefit others, enjoy God's creation, and are thankful to Him.

Family is the bedrock of human society

[Genesis 2:24](#) (LSB)²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

[Exodus 20:14](#) (LSB)¹⁴ “You shall not commit adultery.

[Exodus 20:17](#) (LSB)¹⁷ “You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male slave or his female slave or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

[Leviticus 20:10](#) (LSB)¹⁰ ‘If *there is* a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

[Matthew 5:32](#) (LSB)³² but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

The OT affirms the importance of family in restraining evil

[Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#) (LSB) ⁴ “Hear, O Israel! Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is one! ⁵ “You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ⁷ “You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. ⁸ “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as phylacteries between your eyes. ⁹ “You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

[Exodus 20:12](#) (LSB) ¹² “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which Yahweh your God gives you.

[Deuteronomy 21:18-21](#) (LSB) ¹⁸ “If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they discipline him, he will not even listen to them, ¹⁹ then his father and mother shall seize him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his hometown. ²⁰ “Then they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not listen to our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ ²¹ “Then all the men of his city shall stone him, and he will die; so you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear *of it* and fear.

[Deuteronomy 27:16](#) (LSB) ¹⁶ ‘Cursed is he who dishonors his father or mother.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

Two Primary ways to restrain evil in a child’s heart

[Ephesians 6:1-4](#) (LSB) ¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), ³ SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG IN THE LAND. ⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

[Proverbs 2:1-5](#) (LSB) ¹ My son, if you will receive my words And treasure my commandments within you, ² To make your ear pay attention to wisdom, Incline your heart to discernment; ³ For if you call out for understanding, Give

your voice for discernment; ⁴ If you seek her as silver And search for her as for hidden treasures; ⁵ Then you will understand the fear of Yahweh And find the knowledge of God.

[Proverbs 13:24](#) (LSB) ²⁴ He who holds back his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.

[Proverbs 19:18](#) (LSB) ¹⁸ Discipline your son while there is hope, And do not direct your soul to put him to death.

[Proverbs 22:15](#) (LSB) ¹⁵ Folly is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him.

[Proverbs 23:13](#) (LSB) ¹³ Do not withhold discipline from the child, Although you strike him with the rod, he will not die.

John MacArthur: That's a simple formula – married parents, man and woman, love each other, love God, teach righteousness. Teach the children to honor God, to do what is right. Enforce that with loving discipline – we're not talking about child abuse, we're talking about a loving, corrective discipline that associates a measure of pain with disobedience. That's a very important way to train your children.

The Church

[Matthew 5:13-14](#) (LSB) ¹³ “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out to be trampled under foot by men. ¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;

Conclusion:

[Romans 3:28](#) (LSB) ²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

The Gospel

God

Created and owns everything

[Gen 1:1](#)—*In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth*

[Psalms 24:1](#)—*The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it.*

Is Perfectly Holy

[1 John 1:5](#)—*This is the message we heard from Him and announce to you that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all.*

[Matt 5:48](#)—*Therefore you are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

Requires perfect obedience to His Law

[James 2:10](#)—*for whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.*

Man

Has broken God's law

[Rom 3:10,23](#)—*there is none righteous, not even one...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*

Will pay the eternal penalty for his sin

[Rom. 6:23](#)—*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*

Cannot save himself by his good works

[Titus 3:5](#)—*He saved us not based on works which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.*

Christ

Came to earth both as God and sinless man

[Col 2:9](#)—*For in Him the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form*

Demonstrated God's love by dying on the cross to pay sin's penalty

[Rom 5:8](#)—*But God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*

[2 Cor 5:21](#)—*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Rose from the grave and is alive today

[1 Cor 15:4](#)—*And that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures*

Sinners

Must repent of all that dishonors God

[Isa 55:7](#)—*Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.*

[Luke 9:23](#)—*if anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.*

Must believe in Christ as Lord and Savior

[Rom 10:9](#)—*that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.*

Will you repent and believe in Christ?

[Acts 17:30](#)—*therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance God is declaring to men that all everywhere should repent.*

Don't hesitate to contact Pastor Brandon or Pastor Keith if you have any questions about this sermon or if you would like to know how to follow Christ.

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Additional Quotes

For, were it not good that evil things should also exist, the omnipotent God would almost certainly not allow evil to be, since beyond doubt it is just as easy for Him not to allow what He does not will, as for Him to do what He will. ~

Saint Augustine of Hippo

Every renewed heart is anxious to be free from even a speck of evil. ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

Evil is the real problem in the hearts and minds of men. It is not a problem of physics but of ethics. It is easier to de-nature plutonium than to de-nature the evil spirit of man. ~ **Albert Einstein**

There is nothing evil in matter itself. Evil lies in the spirit. Evils of the heart, of the mind, of the soul, of the spirit—these have to do with man's sin, and the only reason the human body does evil is because the human spirit uses it to do evil. ~ **A. W. Tozer**

My child, flee from every evil and everything that resembleth it. ~ **Didache**

The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between parties either—but right through every human heart—through all human hearts. ~ **Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (School Teacher)**

God would never permit any evil if he could not bring good out of evil. ~ **Thomas Watson**

A defense of God's righteousness is called a theodicy. ~ **Roy B. Zuck**

A theodicy is an attempt to vindicate the justice of God in his actions. ~ **James Montgomery Boice**

A biblical theodicy assumes not that man in his fallenness has the ability to obey God but rather that fallen humans in their corrupted nature choose only what serves their own pleasure and power. ~ **John F. MacArthur; Richard Mayhue**

Jesus solved the Old Testament problem of evil by harmonizing divine justice and mercy. By his atoning death, he is the divine theodicy, vindicating both divine justice and mercy at the cross ([Rom. 3:26](#); [5:8-9](#), [20-21](#)) ~ **John F. MacArthur; Richard Mayhue**

Since the ultimate theodicy is future, we must now deal with the problem of evil by faith. ~ **John Frame**

The word theodicy suggests a man looking about in the world and coming to the conclusion that God's way with it is just. ~ **Gerrit Cornelis Berkouwer (Theologian)**

The problem of theodicy is insoluble outside of a faith that knows the limits of human reason. ~ **Gerrit Cornelis Berkouwer (Theologian)**

Whenever you find the people of God in a condition of real revival, they don't write books on theodicy; they make calls for repentance and contrition. ~ **D. A. Carson**

Since the burden of proof is on the objector, it is not necessary for us to come up with a full theodicy, a complete justification of God's ways. ~ **John Frame**

The most basic cause of controversy over the doctrine of hell is the challenge of theodicy. ~ **Dr. Richard Albert Mohler Jr.**

"Apocalyptic literature is always a theodicy literature, not in the sense of providing a theoretical explanation for evil, but in the sense of offering a vision that sees beyond the horrors of 'the present evil age.' " ~ **Andreas J. Köstenberger; L. Scott Kellum; Charles L. Quarles**

However, while God is properly said to ordain—and thus to be the Ultimate Cause of—all things, he is never the proper chargeable cause of evil. Scripture distinguishes between the (1) Ultimate Cause of an action and (2) the proximate and efficient causes of an action, indicating that only the proximate and efficient causes are blameworthy for an evil action. ~ **John F. MacArthur; Richard Mayhue**

Satan was the immediate cause, but God was the ultimate cause. ~ **John F. MacArthur**

This is not to say that God is the author of sin. He is the *ultimate* cause of sin, not the immediate cause of it. ~ **Millard J. Erickson**

Causality operates hierarchically in the universe: the first and ultimate cause, who is God, gives being to all. ~ **Saint Thomas Aquinas**

Old Testament thought consistently affirms God as the ultimate cause of all things, even the existence of the serpent (3:1), but it never attributes evil to God. He is not morally responsible for the sin of the first couple nor is he culpable for the serpent's deceit. ~ **Kenneth A. Mathews**

What is the problem of this world? What is the ultimate cause of our troubles? It is not man! It is the devil and his unseen forces and powers. ~ **David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Welsh Preacher and Writer)**

These present sufferings ...are actually in a sense blessings in disguise, because the sufferings in this world are used by God for our ultimate good and for our ultimate benefit. ~ **R. C. Sproul**

He is not outside history; history is not working itself out apart from Him; He controls it at this moment. It is in His hands and He is unfolding it. ~ **David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Welsh Preacher and Writer)**

God is the source of primary causality; in other words, He is the first cause. He is the Author of all that is, and He continues to be the primary cause of human events and of natural occurrences. ~ **R. C. Sproul**

Next Time:

God's Word assures us that God is Absolutely Sovereign over Evil!

God's Word assures us that God has an Astounding Purpose For Evil!

God's Word assures us that God is not Author of Evil!

The Problem of Evil