

THE CHALLENGES OF EVIL AND THE IMPERFECT WORLD

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INTRODUCTION

It is obvious to all that the world as it is today, is imperfect which has led to perplexing challenges upon perturbing challenges for all who live on the face of the earth. Originally, the creation or creature was created naturally good and cosmically harmonious but not perfect, since only the Creator is Perfect. Creation was made good and meant to progress toward perfection through sustainable human replenishing, subduing, domination, tending and keeping in submission to God, or otherwise regress toward perdition. Only the Creator does not progress nor regress being already Perfect.

In the Bible, “World” translates creaturely existence (Grk=ktisis i.e. CREATION/creature) or systematic “formation” (Grk=kosmos i.e. COSMOS/universe/existence/system) brought into existence by divine agency.

The “World” also translates operational “arrangement” or cultural pattern (Grk=aion of kosmos) subject to divine rule, managed by human agency or manipulated by demonic agency.

The “World” has three scopes of meaning in the Scripture:

(i) the terrestrial created world (Grk=ge of kosmos/ktisis, made by divine agency) i.e. The Earth globe with its fauna and flora, which are of the Lord’s handiwork (Ps 24:1-2; 37:9-11) and for the inheritance of the saints (Gen 1:28; Matt 5:5): this is groaning under a curse now (Gen 3:14-19), but shall be redeemed from bondage and renewed eventually (Rom 8:21; 2Pet 3:12-13);

(ii) the human community world (Grk=oikoumene of kosmos/ktisis, made by divine agency for management by human agency) i.e. The Inhabitants of the Society, who though under a curse is however beloved of God, for whom Christ was sent to die or lighten and save from sin and condemnation (John 3:16; 8:12; Act 17:24-31); and

(iii) the immoral corrupt world (Grk=aion of kosmos, manipulated malevolently by demonic and human agencies) i.e. The mundane choices, concerns, vainglory and ungodly powers and means in rebellion against God. These constitute the world order of ungodly value systems of this age which are of the devil. This mundane world order of ungodly value systems is under God’s wrath and doomed to pass away (1John 2:15-17).

From [Eph 2:1-3](#) and [Eph 6:12](#) we learn that this doomed immoral world’s course or system:

- is characterised by wickedness, crookedness, rebellion towards God and His Word,

- is subject to elemental mystical manipulations and
- is controlled by demons of disobedience and darkness working in the hearts of children of wrath.

In God's programme, this present Evil Mundane Order (aion=age or world) which seem to be burgeoning, is surely doomed to be overthrown by the coming Glorious Messianic Order (aion=age or world) when Christ returns in His glory to raise and reign with His Saints (Eph 2:7; Heb 6:5; Rev 11:15).

The word "Imperfect" according to the WordWeb dictionary means defective or inadequate in moral strength, courage or will, or wanting in divine attributes. "Challenges" means tasking, demanding or stimulating situations. How did things get to this ever worsening imperfection and increasing challenges? And is there any hope of a way out? Has the Gospel or the Church of Christ any answer or place by way of consolation, hope or solution?

Generally, "Evil" (as moral impurity/defilement and emotional injury/displeasure) is not a creature by God as many may erroneously hasten to think, rather "Evil" is the consequence of the free choice made by the creature. "Evil" is ungodly inclinations and unpleasant emotions felt/experienced or forged/expressed by creatures, whether

- as sin/iniquity before God or
- as suffering/injury before humans.

Not all sin against God is seen as suffering by humans and not all suffering by humans is sin against God.

"Evil" describes immoral and heartless impulses or impure and harmful impacts:

- (1) whatever impulse/impact that constitutes offense and transgression before God (i.e. SIN);
- (2) whatever impulse/impact that causes distress and destruction to humans (i.e. SUFFERING): either directly by sin or derivatively from the curse on sin.

Evil came by the rebellious (sinful) fall of Satan and Adam into antagonism against God which led to God's pronouncement of proper (wise and just) curse on them and the creation within their domains (Gen 3).

Because God loved the fallen human world, Christ came to save them from the doomed demonic immoral world, so that redeemed humanity will resurrect to inherit and liberate the accursed groaning terrestrial world during the coming Messianic Millennium (Rom 8:18-23). After the Millennium all temporal matter shall be dissolved and then replaced with the imperishable New Heaven and New Earth for eternity (Eph 2:4-9; 1Pet 3:10-14; Rev 20 and 21).

Until it is done away with, at the coming of Christ, "evil" (i.e. sin and suffering) shall remain a constant reminder of our misuse of our freedom in adamic rebelling against God and the subsequent deserved, divine, righteous displeasure against all ungodliness (Rom 1:18-28).

"God" refers to the uncreated Creator of all spiritualities and temporalities, Who is the Author and Finisher of all things, Alpha and Omega of all beings, Beginning and Ending of all ages. The true God that is fully God is The One Who is the embodiment, not only of love but also of holiness, not only of kindness but also of righteousness. The true God is He who has all power as Sovereign and Judge, to punish and pardon, to redeem and

condemn, to bless and curse, to show gratuity and gravity as He deems necessary and righteous in His sublime wisdom. This is understandably why God undertook to make humans with similar attributes of freedom of choice but the responsibility to bear the consequences of their choices under God's sovereign rule. This is why God also delegated humanity with similar governmental capacity and authority in this world, under God's sovereign rule.

Today, some confused spiritists (superstitious mystics contrary to scriptural inspiration), and childish philosophers (or "foolosophers"?), motivated by rebellious delinquency, rationalising dialectics, anti-Logos logic, blame-shifting perplexity and futile thoughtlessness, have wishfully speculated and are indeed advocating for outright atheism or for a false god, who should have power only to predestinate, love and bless but lack the power and sovereignty to reprobate, punish and curse. However, such a false-god or non-god is not consistent with nature and realities of human experience nor does such agree with prophetic inspiration and revealed Logos found in the Scripture. Scientific atheists wishfully think that there is nothing like a supernatural, moral and sovereign Deity, yet they paradoxically claim to be intelligent-moral beings resulting from purposeless yet progressive evolution. While Occultists strive to be supernatural through mysticism, Ambitionists either strive to be super-intelligentsias through science or be super-powers through politics and commerce. Therefore, spiritualism, science and society without a sovereign God is entirely absurd.

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MAKING SENSE OF EVIL

Evil is not a creature but quality of moral impulses or emotional impacts, as well as experiences or expressions. Therefore, Evil was not created at all, let alone being created by God; it began as choices and consequences of activities by responsibly free creatures (Satan and Humanity). Some ancient religions had tried to resolve the problem of evil by dualism (the idea that creation is shared between two equal gods of Good and of Evil). Modern philosophers imagining that evil damages the proof of the good and powerful God revealed in the Scripture, proffer a phony god that could have made a creation where evil is impossible. Others frustrated by the challenges of evil, either deny the reality of the good God or deny the reality of evil. However, these phony conceptual logics, superstitious beliefs, revisionist speculations and reactionary postulations are so unrealistic and shallow that they are self disannulling. This shows how perplexed, naïve and despondent the wisdom of man, unaided by God's Spirit, could become when engaged with sublime matters (Ps 14:1; 1Cor 1:20; 3:19). However, great minds always appreciate the credibility, validity and sublimity of divinely revealed wisdom and truth of the Prophetic and Apostolic Scriptures found in the Bible.

Max Planck (1858-1947) the Father of quantum science said:

"Man needs science in order to know, religion in order to act."

Even Albert Einstein (1879-1955) the Father of science of relativity said:

"Science without religion is blind, religion without science is lame."

Superstition is groping in the dark (Act 17:26-30), speculation is guess-work (1Cor 3:19; Col 2:8), unbelief is futile foolishness (Ps 14:1; Rom 1:18-22), but scriptural revelation is sure truth, because it is prophetically inspired. God is Spirit, moral and sensible. He created a sensible nature to be mastered through science, a sociable world to be ordered

by godly morality, a spiritual man to be sustained through faith and revelation. A full man is one who is scientific, moral and spiritual – in the image of God. To ignore the scientific is nonsense, to ignore the moral is wickedness, and to ignore the spiritual is foolishness. Courage and wisdom to make sense of all these is the way forward, rather than denying any of these out of despair and perplexity.

1Co 2:4-16 ISV

(4) My message and my preaching were not accompanied by clever words of wisdom, but by a display of the Spirit's power,

(5) so that your faith would not be based on human wisdom but on God's power.

(6) However, when we are among mature people, we do speak a message of wisdom, but not the wisdom of this world or of the rulers of this world, who are passing off the scene.

(7) Instead, we speak about God's secret wisdom that has been hidden, which God destined for our glory before the world began.

(8) None of the rulers of this world understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.

(9) But as it is written, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined the things that God has prepared for those who love him."

(10) But God has revealed those things to us by his Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the deep things of God.

(11) Is there anyone who can understand his own thoughts except by his own inner spirit? In the same way, no one can know the thoughts of God except God's Spirit.

(12) Now, we have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who comes from God, so that we can understand the things that were freely given to us by God.

(13) We don't speak about these things in words taught us by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit, as we explain spiritual things to spiritual people.

(14) A person who isn't spiritual doesn't accept the things of God's Spirit, for they are nonsense to him. He can't understand them because they are spiritually evaluated.

(15) The spiritual person evaluates everything but is subject to no one else's evaluation.

(16) For "Who has known the mind of the Lord so that he can advise him?" However, we have the mind of Christ.

The truth is that God is NOT only all-good and all-powerful (as some philosophers limit themselves to think), He is ALSO all-wise and all-sovereign, Holy and Love, and working out His purpose through creation, providence and redemption. Each of these attributes must take the others into cognizance. That is why, for instance, the all-powerful God cannot lie (Tit 1:2).

God's all-wise goodness demands that if He made humans and angels morally free, they must be free in every way to choose either perfection or perdition, either self-dependency or God-dependency, either obedience or disobedience and be entirely responsible for their choices. Otherwise their freedom is nullified, coerced and incongruous with perfect goodness on the part of God. God's goodness therefore necessitates that moral aberrations be judged and moral rectitude be rewarded, and God is entirely capable of handling all these. In His INFINITE WISDOM, God had purposed from the beginning that evil should be possible or masterable but punishable and remediable until triumphed over in the eschaton, rather than evil being excluded as impossibility in the creation and history.

Gen 2:15-17

(15) And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to work it and to keep it.

(16) 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 of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.

This is the enigmatic nag of the realities of God's creation, freedom and goodness. The wilful introduction of evil into creation by the Devil is a stupefying blow on the rebellious human mind such that hinders communion with or appreciation of God. Nevertheless, without the possibility of evil, goodness can neither be appreciated as good nor as virtuous, since it would be deemed either unnecessary or devoid of righteousness. Again without moral creatures, there is no moral Creator. But God's wisdom and power are shown in His provision of necessary temporal help in trouble and eternal redemption for those who freely turn to Him through faith in Christ.

To make sense of evil, one must go beyond philosophical speculation (which operates within the limits of fallen creation) and ascend to biblical inspiration which has prophetic revelatory access into the eternal and original purpose of creation. The Scripture reveals that God made the creation good and meant it for good use. Misuse of creation is sinful and triggers off or results to painful consequences. The Scripture comprehensively affirms that God is both merciful and righteous (Exo 34:5-7), altogether great, good, purposeful and trustworthy. Amen.

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THE ORIGINALLY GOOD WORLD

Every creature was created good but subject to change (i.e. under probation for possible improvement or degeneration). This distinguishes the Creator, Who is absolutely perfect and NOT subject to change (i.e. neither improvable nor degradable). The direction of development or degeneration of the creation depended on how the human race exercised their discretion and dominion. The perfect purpose of the creation is to fully please and glorify God. When creation displeases God, it loses its glory and degenerates to destruction. The responsibility of the human race (as God's vicegerent image) was to run God's creation and the human society according to God's full pleasure and praise. This is also the order in heaven:

Rev 4:8-11

(8) And the four living creatures had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.

(9) And when those living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him that sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

(10) The four and twenty elders fall down before him that is sitting on the throne, and worship him that lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

(11) You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for you have created all things, and for your pleasure they are and were created.

Originally, the earth was created “good” (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25), yet there was the initial challenge for the human race to fill-up, subdue and dominate the earth, as God’s viceroys or caretakers (Gen 1:26-28). The human being was likewise created “very good” (Gen 1:31), but was yet to fulfil the divine mission of subduing the earth. To provide a base from which humanity would launch their challenging viceroy mission, God planted the Paradise Garden of Eden as a special, beautiful dwelling palace of nourishment and spiritual fellowship for the Adamic race (Gen 2:8-9).

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THE FALL AND THE HOPE

After Satan fell and invaded the earth, he tempted Adam and Eve to rebel against God. At the very first opportunity to subdue creation, humanity failed woefully by rather subjecting themselves under Satan and sin! By this failure the Adamic race lost their divine glory (Rom 3:23) and succumbed to depravity of shame and death (Gen 2:15-17; 3:8-10). To worsen the situation God, in His righteousness, had to further subject the sinful and fallen Adamic family to judgement that brought the curse of condemnation on all humans as well as bondage on the whole creation under Man’s rule. Worse still, sinfulness separated humanity away from God’s presence (Gen 3:16-24). This left us with:

- (1) a fallen, dying and accursed human race, faced with the challenges of
- (2) subduing an accursed earth and
- (3) liberating a demon-infested world system.

However, by His mercy and grace, God gave the promise and provision of salvation through Christ to help human infirmity:

Rom 8:26-35

(26) In the same way, the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we should. But the Spirit himself intercedes with groans too deep for words,

(27) and the one who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, for the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to God's will.

(28) And we know that he works all things together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

(29) For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

(30) And those whom he predestined, he also called; and those whom he called, he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

(31) What, then, can we say about all of this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

(32) The one who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for all of us-surely he will give us all things along with him, won't he?

(33) Who can bring an accusation against God's chosen people? It is God who justifies them!

(34) Who can condemn them? Christ Jesus, who died-and more importantly, who has been raised and is seated at the right hand of God-is the one who is also interceding for us!

(35) Who can separate us from Christ's love? Can trouble, distress, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger, or a sword?

This salvation was fully inaugurated IN GRACE at Christ's first coming, but shall be finally consummated IN GLORY at His second coming. Meanwhile the Church's duty is to occupy herself (Lk 19:13) for God, working-out and spreading-forth this Salvation through her walk, witness and worship, by the word of Truth, by works of righteousness and in the will of God. The core Gospel message of this salvation in Christ Jesus is simply this:

"The coming of Christ (The Messiah) marks the time for the fulfillment of God's loving promise to "bless (i.e. grant SALVATION/Eternal Life to) all nations" {through the "Seed" of Abraham (Gal 3:8) and of David (Act 13:33-35)}.

This blessing comes in the form of:

- remission of sin (or deliverance from darkness, damnation and destruction),
- bestowal of the Holy Spirit, by Whom we are
 - assured of reception into God's heavenly kingdom and
 - empowered to conform as sons in the image of Christ.

This salvation blessing is freely given to anyone who:

- repents of sin/ignorance,
- believes in Jesus as the "Christ" or "Messiah" {i.e. the One divinely Anointed to be the Son of God (Lk 1:35; Heb 1:5) and Saviour of all (Isa 49:6), as proved by His life and resurrection from death (Rom 1:4)}, and
- submits to Him as Lord of all Who shall come to be the Judge of all"

The power of the Gospel is that it saves the human soul for now (from depravity, damnation and destruction) while preparing the Saints for the eventual glorification of our mortal bodies as well as the liberation of this groaning creation, when Christ comes again.

Rom 8:9-17

(9) But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

(10) And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

(11) But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also bring to life your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you.

(12) Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

(13) For if you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if you through the Spirit do put to death the deeds of the body, you shall live.

(14) For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

(15) For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, by which we cry, Abba, Father.

(16) The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

(17) And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, so that we may be also glorified together.

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THE IMPERFECT WORLD AND THE CHALLENGES

Such was the magnitude of the challenge facing humanity. A world initially created good and meant to be perfected by innocent humanity before the fall, but later had to be

accursed because of reprobate humanity after the fall. Humanity's failed assignment of a perfecting domination as God's servants over the earth and its fullness (Gen 1:26-28) is now compensated by the expectation of a liberating manifestation as glorious sons to a groaning creation:

Rom 8:18-25

(18) For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us.

(19) For the creation is eagerly waiting for God to reveal his children,

(20) because the creation was subjected to frustration, though not by its own choice. The one who subjected it did so in the hope

(21) that the creation itself would also be set free from slavery to decay in order to share the glorious freedom of God's children.

(22) For we know that all creation has been groaning with the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

(23) However, not only creation groans, but we who have the first fruits of the Spirit also groan inwardly as we eagerly wait for our adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

(24) For we were saved with this hope in mind. Now hope that is seen is not really hope, for who hopes for what can be seen?

(25) But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience.

Moreover, as we approach the second coming of Christ, the Spirit has spoken expressly that evil and peril shall pinnacle (1Tim 4:1-3; 2Tim 3:1-5). However at the end of all these, we have the assurance and hope that Christ will come again in glory to bring all perturbation and perplexities to an end. Then all things shall be restored, renewed and regenerated (Rev 20:11 to 21:1).

Act 3:19-26

(19) "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out,

(20) that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,

(21) whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.

(22) Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you.

(23) And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.'

(24) And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days.

(25) You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'

(26) God, having raised up his servant [Jesus Christ], sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

Glory be to God who sent His Son, Jesus Christ to make the saving difference that has tilted the balance of these daunting difficulties to our advantage. Through Christ these endless challenges and imperfections shall surely come to an end. Christ called us through the Gospel, redeemed us through the Cross and empowered us as sons by the

Holy Spirit, by Whom also He guarantees us eventual victory and inheritance in His Kingdom (Eph 1:13-14). Only those who are thus saved through faith in Christ become properly equipped to face these endless challenges with any assurance of victory.

In Matthew chapter 24, while human wisdom speculated a better future for the world, Christ warned that the world would experience increasing “birth-pain” challenges which will be terminated when He comes again. This warning was reiterated by the Apostles (2Tim 3:1-5). Here are some six main ramifications of these challenges:

1. The challenge of true Spiritual Relationship with God our Creator, Judge and Redeemer: e.g. unbiblical spirituality, false doctrine, deceptive spirituality, syncretism, nominal formalism, spiritual ignorance, compromise under trials and temptations, prayerlessness, loss of confidence in God, spiritual pride, monetized spirituality.
2. The challenge of Evangelizing every Nation with the saving Gospel of Christ: e.g. unbelief, ignorance, parochialism, neglect for mission and evangelism.
3. The challenge of Spiritual Warfare against the Evil Powers of wickedness and darkness: e.g. apostasy, atheism, agnosticism, anti-Christianity, Satanism, sorcery, occultism, superstition, idolatry.
4. The challenge of godly Ethics and Equity in dealing with other People around us: e.g. lawlessness, wars, murderousness, gang violence, brigandage, oppression, anarchy, denial of fundamental human rights, political instability, racism, tribalism, xenophobia, corruption, sexual immorality and perversion, collapse of marriage and family, collapse of social values, hatred, fraud, greed.
5. The challenge of Health and Wellness of our Bodies: e.g. hunger, poverty, disease, death, economic meltdown, mental stress, heartbreaks, fear, despair, suffering and misery, deprivation of basic necessities of life, drug peddling, abuse and addiction, epidemics and pandemics.
6. The challenge of Subduing and Liberating the creation around us: e.g. accidents, natural disasters, climate change, environmental pollution and degradation.

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THE WAY FORWARD

The last three of these challenges may, to some extent, be within the reach of all people (Civil Society and Government) to solve, irrespective of creed, status and race; but the first three are to a great extent, particularly solvable by the Church. This is because the enabling grace for such enormous task has been given to the Christian by Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. The way forward is not to despair or succumb to these challenges, but overcome them to please and glorify God. Therefore:

- (i) while we call on all people all over the world to rise conscientiously to these challenges,
- (ii) the Church more so, is called upon to arise and shine the light of the Gospel to the world, and salt the earth with the wisdom of God and the love of Christ.
- (iii) Also we invite all and sundry to repent and return to God, accept Christ’s Lordship and believe His saving Gospel without further delay or disputation, for this is the sure means out of this vicious quagmire.

The Gospel of Christ offers us redemption from sin, revelation to understand divine mysteries and hope to endure in the midst of daunting challenges; as well as gives us the power to conquer and triumph over all things, in a way that fully pleases and glorifies God as well as purifies and preserves our souls.

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