

The Problem of Pain

C.S. Lewis

Week Three

Chapter Three – Divine Goodness

- If God is wiser than we, His judgment must differ on many things, and not least on good and evil. But if God's moral judgment is so different from ours that our 'black' may be His 'white,' we can mean nothing by calling him good. (p. 28)
- If He is not, in our sense, good, then we will obey, if at all, wholly through fear. (p. 29)
- Lewis was very nearly without a moral conscience when he started university studies, but he began to associate with young men who knew and tried to obey the moral law. (p. 29)
- The recognition of the new standards he saw gave him a sense of shame and guilt; he had blundered into a society he was unfit for. But he saw some continuity with the little shreds of good he already had. (p. 30)
- The Divine 'goodness' differs from ours, but it is not sheerly different: it differs from ours not as white from black but as a perfect circle from a child's first attempt to draw a wheel. But when the child has learned to draw, it will know that the circle it then makes is what it was trying to make from the very beginning. (p. 30)
- By the goodness of God, we mean nowadays almost exclusively His lovingness ... and by Love, most of us mean kindness – the desire to see others than the self happy; not happy in this way or that, but just happy. (p. 31)
- We want not so much a Father in heaven as a grandfather – a senile benevolence who 'liked to see the young people enjoying themselves. (p. 31)
- We don't live in a universe like that, so if we still believe that God is love, our conception of love needs correction. (p. 32)
- It is for people whom we care nothing about that we demand happiness on any terms: with our friends, our lovers, our children, we are exacting and would rather see them suffer much than be happy in contemptible and estranging modes. (p. 33)
- If God is Love, He is, by definition, something more than mere kindness ... He has paid us the intolerable compliment of loving us, in the deepest, most tragic, most inexorable sense. (p. 33)
- Some conceptions of God's love for us:
 - Artist and artifact, the potter and the clay. We are a Divine work of art, and God will not be satisfied with us until we have a certain character. (p. 34) It is natural for us to wish that God had designed us for a less glorious and less arduous destiny; but then we are wishing not for more love but less. (p. 35)
 - Man and beast; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. The association of man and dog is primarily for man's sake. A trained dog is admitted, by Grace, to a world entirely beyond its animal destiny. (p. 36)
 - Father and son - authoritative love on one side and obedient love on the other. (p. 37)
 - Man and woman; such love may forgive all infirmities and love in spite of them, but cannot cease to will their removal. (p. 39)
- You asked for a loving God; you have one. Not a senile benevolence, but a consuming, purifying fire. (p. 39)
- To ask that God's love should be content with us as we are is to ask that God should cease to be God. Because he already loves us, he must labor to make us lovable. (p. 41)

- God has no needs. His love causes all the goodness we have. If God sometimes speaks as though he could be wanting something, it means He has made Himself able to hunger and created in Himself that which we can satisfy ... If He who in Himself can lack nothing chooses to need us, it is because we need to be needed. (pp. 43-44)
- We are only creatures. Our role must always be that of patient to agent, mirror to light, echo to voice. Our highest activity must be response, not initiative. To experience His love is to surrender. Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us. (pp. 44-45)
- God wills our good, and our good is to love Him. We are bidden to put on Christ, to become like God. (p. 47)
- God gives us what He has, not what He has not. He gives us the happiness that there is, not the happiness that is not. (p. 47)

Chapter Four – Human Wickedness

- We need alteration because we have used our free will to become very bad. But many modern people can't see this. (p. 48)
- Why? We have concentrated so much on one virtue – kindness – that we believe nothing but cruelty seems really bad. And most of us don't see ourselves as cruel. (p. 49)
- A second reason – psychoanalysis and the doctrine of repressions and inhibitions. Many people believe shame is dangerous and that things we used to be ashamed of are just natural and should be out in the open. We need to recover the old sense of sin. (p. 50)
- We think the worst we have done to God is to leave him alone. Why can't he return the compliment? (p. 51)
- We are deceived by looking at the outside of things. We suppose ourselves to be roughly not much worse than Y and better than the abominable X. (p. 52)
- We are like the bad tennis player who calls his normal form his 'bad days' and mistakes his rare successes for his normal. (p. 53)
- We believe we share a corporate guilt, but we don't face up to our individual guilt. (p. 54)
- We believe that time cancels sin, but guilt is not washed out by time but by repentance and the blood of Christ. God sees us sinning for eternity, even if we don't. The joys of Heaven may be bearing shame forever, rejoicing in the occasion that it furnished to God's compassion. (p. 55)
- We must guard against the feeling that there is safety in numbers. But everyone who stops to think can see that when we meet the enemy, our neglect of our sin is going to cost every man his life. (p. 58)
- From considering how the cruelty of our ancestors looks to us, you may get some inkling of how our softness, worldliness and timidity would have looked to them, and how both must look to God. (p. 58)
- Plato rightly taught that virtue is one, and you can't be kind unless you have all the other virtues. (p. 59)
- God may be more than moral goodness, but He is not less. The road to the Promised Land runs past Sinai. (p. 59)
- If you ask yourselves why you are not as pious as the primitive Christians, your own heart will tell you it's because you never thoroughly intended it. (p. 61)
- We all sin by needlessly disobeying the apostolic injunction to 'rejoice' as much as by anything else. (p. 61)
- When the saints say they are vile, they are recording truth with scientific accuracy. Their humility is to be emulated. (p. 62)