

The Problem of Evil and Suffering

- The Problem Stated
- The Problem Addressed
- Suffering In Our World
- The Benefits of Suffering

Good morning!

I'm glad to be here, and I'm thankful for the presence of each one.

We are going to jump right into the lesson.

If you would,

A. Notice with me [Judges chapter 6:1-6](#)

If you would like to follow along, We'll be reading from [Judges 6:1-6](#).

- “the children of Israel did **EVIL** in the sight of the Lord:
and the Lord **DELIVERED** them into the hand of Midian **SEVEN** years.
² And the hand of Midian prevailed **AGAINST** Israel:

and because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds. ³ And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Ama-lekites, and the children of the east, even they came up **AGAINST** them;

⁴ and they encamped **AGAINST** them, and **DESTROYED** the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and **LEFT no sustenance for Israel**, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.

⁵ For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and **they entered into the land to DESTROY it**.

⁶ And Israel was greatly impoverished **BECAUSE of the Midianites;**
and **the children of Israel CRIED unto the Lord.**” ([Judges 6:1-6](#))

For seven years Israel was victimized by the Midianites.

Israel's crops were destroyed, their livestock was confiscated,
and the people were forced to seek refuge in the dens and caves of the mountains.

During This Difficult Time

B. “The Angel of the Lord” Appeared unto Gideon,

[Judges 6:12-13](#) reads,

- “And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him,
The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.
¹³ And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, **if the LORD be with us, WHY then, is all this befallen us?**
and **WHERE** be all His miracles, which our fathers told us **OF**,
saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?
but now **the Lord hath FORSAKEN us**,
and **DELIVERED** us into the hands of the Midianites.” ([Judges 6:12-13](#))

This very question is what many are asking today!

Many are asking, If God is with us:

- Why did my loved one have to die from cancer?
- Why was my loved one killed in a car wreck?
- And so many other WHY's ?

C. These and a thousand similar questions could be asked.

- These questions **GRIP** the human **HEART**.
- **THOUSANDS** cry, for some sort of an answer.

The lesson this morning, is entitled “**The Problem of Evil and Suffering**”.

Notice with me,

I. The Problem Stated

A. With many people, the great **OBSTACLE** to **Belief IN God**, is the problem of **evil and suffering**.

- Many sincere people, agonize greatly in an effort to resolve this problem in their minds.
- Thus, many assume that there cannot be a loving God, such as the Bible indicates.

B. This problem is Not a new one, of course, it was set forth by the Greek philosopher Epicurus, more than 2,000 years ago.

C. Epicurus argued:

- If God wishes to prevent evil, but cannot; He is not all powerful, and therefore not God.
- If God has the power to prevent evil, but does not; He is not all good, and therefore not God.
- If God has both the power, and desire to prevent evil, why is there evil, pain and suffering in the world?

D. The fallacy of this argument, of course, is the **ASSUMPTION** that **no good purpose can be served by the allowance of evil and suffering in the world**.

E. No man should be so bold, as to think that he can completely understand everything about **the problem of suffering**.

- “O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!” ([Rom.11:33](#))
- “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may **DO** all the **WORDS** of this law.” ([Deut.29:29](#))

God has revealed to us what we need to know.

- “these are written, that ye might believe, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through His name.” ([Jn.20:31](#))

The things we would like to know, but can't, we must accept by faith, knowing that God always does what is right.

- “**...Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?**” ([Gen.18:25](#))

...and that's a rhetorical question, meaning “**yea verily He'll do what's right**”.

Jesus said to Peter,

- “O thou of little faith, **wherefore** didst thou doubt?” ([Matt.14:31](#))

Notice with me,

II. The Problem Addressed

First of all, it should be noted that,

A. When a Person Raises the Question of “evil,”

He or she, is inadvertently appealing to some universal system of justice, which **EVIL** allegedly violates.

- But if there is no God, there is no universal system of “rightness,” then how could there be any such thing as evil?

The path of Atheism, leaves a lot of unanswered questions.

In the path of Righteousness, God gives the answers we need.

B. God Expresses His love, by Giving Us the Freedom to Choose

- As “God is love” ([1Jn.4:8](#))

God has given us freedom of **CHOICE**.

Joshua said long ago,

- “**IF** it seem **EVIL** unto you to serve the Lord, **CHOOSE** you this day **WHOM** ye will **SERVE**; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will **SERVE the Lord.**” (the famous passage of [Josh.24:15](#))
- “If any man **WILL**, do **HIS WILL**, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” ([Jn.7:17](#))
- “And the Spirit and the bride say, **COME**.
And let him that heareth say, **COME**.
And let him that is athirst **COME**.
And whosoever **WILL**, let him **TAKE** the water of life **FREELY.**” ([Rev.22:17](#))

God has not slavishly programmed us, without Free-Will.

Where freedom of choice is permitted, there is certainly the,

C. Possibility of Man Making the **WRONG** Choices

1. Wrong choices must entail some adverse consequences.
2. **Think about this:** if all actions [or choices], both good and bad, produced exactly the same effect, how would one ever learn to **CHOOSE** the good, and **REJECT** the bad?
3. It is clear, therefore, that finite beings with personal will-power must be allowed to **SUFFER** the consequences of their **WRONG** choices **IF** they are to **LEARN**, that the good is to be **VALUED** over the bad.

In fact, [Proverbs 13:15](#) reads,

- “Good understanding giveth favour: but the **WAY** of transgressors (or bad choices) is **HARD.**”

In light of this, let us consider several types of,

III. Suffering In Our World

What about,

A. Personal Wrong Choices?

We frequently bring suffering upon ourselves **BECAUSE** of the bad decisions we make.

Notice these Biblical examples:

- “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.” ([Judges 6:1](#))
- “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters” ([1Pet.4:15](#))

If a man steals and goes to prison, is it not his fault?

If a man murders and is executed, is God to blame?

Yet, someone may argue: God could have prevented the crime, hence, the suffering.

- **NOT** if He wanted to preserve man’s freedom of choice!
- You see, God limits His own activity, by lovingly granting man, **FREE** will-power!

We are considering types of suffering in Our World.

What About,

B. Personal Wrong Choices, of Others?

A considerable amount of suffering, is caused by the bad choices of our fellow man. We cannot argue for our freedom of choice, while denying it for everyone else.

God is not a respecter of persons

- Peter “said, Of a truth I perceive that God is **NO** respecter of persons:” ([Acts 10:34](#))
- Paul said, “there is **NO** respect of persons with God.” ([Rom.2:11](#))

So, innocent persons may be killed in a wreck involving a drunk driver.

In times of war, many are killed as a consequence of the evil decisions of a **FEW** leaders.

We sometimes pay the price, from the freedom of **BAD** choices, **BY** other’s.

What about the,

C. Personal Wrong Choices, of Former Generations?

If we are to reap the benefits of good labors, from generations in the past, such as scientific discoveries
And the advancement in technology, **can we avoid reaping the evils as well?**

God warned that rejection of Him, would affect generations, yet unborn

HE said,

- “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: ⁵ thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord Thy God am a jealous God, **visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children** unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; ⁶ and **shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep My commandments.**” ([Ex.20:5-6](#))

In Connection With This Point, We Need to Consider Diseases

- First, disease is ultimately related to man’s bad choices (or sin).
- Before Adam and Eve’s transgression they were unaffected by disease.
 - When they rebelled, they were deprived of the “tree of life” ([Gen.3:22-23](#)), and we are heirs of the conditions, **THEY** introduced into the world.
 - “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon **ALL** men, for that **ALL** have sinned:” ([Rom.5:12](#))
- Secondly, many organisms, which are sometimes harmful, are also beneficial.
 - For example, certain types of bacteria facilitate digestion or decomposition of waste materials.
 - Were it not for bacteria, this WORLD would be one huge, stinking garbage dump.

What about the natural Disasters of our day?

- **What causes these Disasters?**
 - The drastically different geophysical features of the planet
 - ...Mountain ranges, deserts, varying pressure areas
- **What created these varying conditions?**
 - Many scholars believe it was the universal flood

The Bible informs us that,

- “God saw that the wickedness of man was **GREAT** in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was **ONLY evil CONTINUALLY**.
⁶ And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.
⁷ And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me, that I have made them.” ([Gen.6:5-7](#))
- **Human wickedness was the cause, of the varying conditions!**

We are still considering types of suffering in Our World.

What About,

D. The Natural Laws In Our World

We live in a world that is regulated by God's natural law, thus a certain amount of suffering is inevitable

For example: gravity.

[Acts 20:9](#) says,

- “there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.”

Eutychus was a victim of God's natural law.

We benefit greatly from God's natural law, but if we violate this law, we **WILL** suffer.

Could you imagine what would happen, if God suspended His natural laws?

Consider some thoughts concerning,

IV. The Benefits of Suffering

Regarding

A. Physical Suffering

1. Suppose one's clothes caught on fire, without our pain, one would be engulfed before he\she realized what was happening.
2. Pain causes us to go to the doctor
3. Pain causes us to avoid those things that will hurt us.
4. Pain helps us to develop noble character, As without pain, where would traits like patience and bravery be cultivated?

Regarding

B. Spiritual Suffering

Consider these Bible passages:

- “the Lord spake to Manas-seh, and to his people: but they would not hearken.
¹¹ Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host, of the king of Assyria, which took Manas-seh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.
¹² And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers,” ([2Chron.33:10-12](#))
- “Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now have I **KEPT** Thy Word.” ([Psa.119:71](#))
- “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might **LEARN** Thy statutes.” ([Psa.119:71](#))

- “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” ([Rom.8:28](#))
- “though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.
¹⁷ For our **LIGHT affliction**, which is but for a **MOMENT**,
worketh FOR us, a far more exceeding and eternal **WEIGHT** of glory;” ([2Cor.4:16-17](#))

Paul said,

- “lest I should be exalted ABOVE measure, through the **ABUNDANCE** of the revelations, there was **GIVEN** to me, a **THORN** in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to **BUFFET** me,
lest I should be EXALTED above measure.

⁸ For this thing I besought the Lord **THRICE**, that it might **DEPART** from me.

⁹ And He said unto me, **My Grace is SUFFICIENT** for thee:
for **My strength is made PERFECT in weakness.**

Most **GLADLY** therefore will I rather **GLORY** in my infirmities,
that the **POWER** of Christ may rest UPON me.

¹⁰ **Therefore I take PLEASURE** in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses
for **Christ’s sake**: for **WHEN** I am weak, **THEN** am I strong.” ([2Cor.12:7-10](#))

If you would like to follow along, we’ll read from Heb.12:5-13,
[Heb.12:5-13](#) reads,

- “And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you **AS** unto children,
My son, despise **NOT** thou the chastening of the Lord, **NOR** faint when thou art rebuked of Him:
⁶ for **WHOM** the Lord **LOVETH**, He chasteneth, and scourgeth **EVERY** son whom He receiveth.

⁷ **IF** ye **ENDURE** chastening, God dealeth with you **AS** with sons;
for what son is he, whom the father chasteneth not?

⁸ But **IF** ye be **withOUT** chastisement, whereof all are partakers, **THEN** are ye bastards, and **NOT** sons.

⁹ Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which **CORRECTED** us, and we **GAVE** them reverence:
shall we not much rather be in **SUBJECTION** unto the Father of spirits, and **LIVE**?

¹⁰ For they verily for a few days **CHASTENED** us, after their own pleasure;
but **HE** for our **PROFIT**, that we might be **PARTAKERS** of His holiness.

¹¹ Now **NO** chastening for the present **SEEMETH** to be joyous, **BUT** grievous:
nevertheless **AFTERWARD**, it yieldeth the peaceable **FRUIT** of righteousness
unto them which are **EXERCISED** thereby.

¹² Wherefore **LIFT UP** the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

¹³ and make **STRAIGHT** paths for your feet, lest that which is **LAME** be turned out of the way;
BUT let it rather be **HEALED**.” (that’s [Heb.12:5-13](#))

James wrote,

- “My brethren, **COUNT** it all joy, **WHEN** ye fall into divers temptations;
³ **KNOWING** this, that the **TRYING** of your faith, **WORKETH** patience.
⁴ But let **PATIENCE**, have her **PERFECT** work,
that ye may be **PERFECT** and **ENTIRE**, wanting **NOTHING**.” ([Jms.1:2-4](#))

- “Blessed is the man that **endureth temptation**:
for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life,
which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.” ([Jms.1:12](#))

C. In the midst of suffering we must realize:

That there is a place where,

- “the wicked cease from troubling; and there, the weary be at rest.” ([Job 3:17](#))

John said,

- “I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. ² And I John, saw the holy city, (the) new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
³ And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, **the tabernacle of God is with men**, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.
⁴ And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.
⁵ And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.
And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.” ([Rev.21:1-5](#))

D. What should our attitude be toward spiritual suffering?

The Bible says this of the apostles, that

- “they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name.” ([Acts 5:41](#))
- “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God **endure grief, suffering wrongfully.**
²⁰ For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.
²¹ For even hereunto were ye called: because **Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example**, that ye should follow His steps: ²² who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth:
²³ who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.” ([1Pet.2:19-23](#))

Suffering is a small thing when compared to heaven.

- “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” ([Rom.8:18](#))

E. The results of handling spiritual suffering properly

...Is Reigning in heaven.

- “if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us.” ([2Tim.2:12](#))

The results of handling spiritual suffering properly,

Is a crown of life received,

- “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.” ([Jms.1:12](#))

If you **have need of repentance** ([Lk.13:3](#)) **Or have yet to be baptized INTO Christ** ([Gal.3:26-27](#)),
Please come, as together we stand and sing.