

CCC WHY IS THERE EVIL AND SUFFERING Part 5

Frequently Asked Questions

Baptism

Joke:

We've been in a series called "Frequently Asked Questions" – and today we're going to continue to look at the very tough question that we started looking at last week: "Why is there Evil and Suffering?" It's a big question. I want to start off by doing a brief overview of what we talked about last week and then we will get into today's message. We started last week's message looking at a part of the Bible that describes Jesus, when the very Son of God Himself was being confronted with the full force of evil in Mark 15:33-34 and to put this passage of scripture into context... we need to see what happened just prior to this. Just prior to this event Jesus had been

betrayed by a very close friend, He had just been found guilty by a court even though He was innocent, He had been sentenced to death by crucifixion, He had been whipped savagely and then had nails been driven in His hands and His feet and He was suspended between heaven and earth, hanging on a wooden cross. That's what had happened as this passage of scripture unfolds. We read in Mark 15:33-34, "*When the sixth hour had come darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?'*" If we were to leave this story right there it will almost appear to us all as if evil has triumphed over good. If we were to leave this story right there it would look as if suffering and pain had the final word. But we have to keep on reading because there's good news to come. Not only did Jesus endure the crucifixion, not only

did He face it and even die but then He still was able to be victorious in the end. The Bible tells us how. In Hebrews 12:2-3 *“We are fixing our eyes upon Jesus who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross. Consider Him who has endured so that you may not grow weary and lose heart.”*

That’s what I want to talk about this morning. I want to talk about how we can face the evil and the suffering and the pain of our life and not just endure it but emerge victoriously on the other side of it. How do we face it and not grow weary. How do we face it and not lose heart.

First we need to tackle three big questions. The first is...

1. Why is there so much suffering and evil in the world? When people ask that question what I really think they are asking is more of a, Why didn’t God just create the world perfect to begin with? Why wouldn’t God just make a world where we wouldn’t have to deal with these issues

any more and that’s a good question I think? And let me give you the simple answer – He did. God did create the world perfect from the beginning. God’s word, the Bible tells us very clearly about creation and how everything in the beginning was perfect it was good. But the problem came with the man that God created and the woman that God created they both decided to tell God to shove off... they had there own plans on how they wanted to live. And from that moment until now our world has seen the effects of that decision.

So then the question we probably need to ask now is, “Is God responsible for evil because He created you and I with the ability to choose evil?” He created you and I with a free will. See God wanted us to love Him. If you’re going to love God, it’s only a true love if you choose to love God. God could have created us as robots or machines where

mechanically we'd say, "I love You, God." But that wouldn't have been love. Nobody wants somebody to love them by force. It's only love if we *choose* to love someone. It's only love if you make the decision to love. If we have the ability to choose to love, then we also have the ability to choose *not* to love. And people have been choosing not to love God for a long time, people have been choosing to live life on their own terms for a long time, people have been choosing to make decisions without God's help and guidance from the very beginning. And the results of that are very apparent to us today. So who is responsible for all this evil – who is responsible for the evil of broken families, who is responsible for the evil of hurting people continuing to hurting other people, who is responsible for murder, for chaos, for wickedness, who's to blame? If we were to stack all the evil in the world it would really be in

two piles. There would be a pile of moral evil and there would be a pile of natural evil. Moral evil, we understand. That's the evil of people against other people and this represents like 90% of all evil and all the suffering in the world.

The other pile is the Natural evil. It's a smaller part of the evil but it's very real and it's in our world today. That's the evil of natural disasters – flood, hurricanes, all of that, illnesses like cancer and AIDS and all of those types of things. But the real truth of the matter is most of the evil in our world is in the first pile, moral evil. The bible calls it the evil that lurks in my heart. It's the evil of people against people. See friends God created a world where evil can exist... Why, because He gave us the freedom to choose evil over good. But make sure you get

this... God did not cause the evil. The second big question we want to look at is

2. Is there an evil spirit at work in the world?

Is there a personality of evil at work in the world today?

The answer to that question is very simply, yes. The Bible describes a very real enemy. He goes by many names in the bible. You've heard him called Satan, the devil, Lucifer, the father of lies, the angel of light. The Bible describes him as trying to deceive and distort us at all times. He promises pleasure to you and I yes he only delivers the stings of pain.

The third Big question is:

3. Why doesn't God just put a final stop to evil? Why doesn't God just stop it? If God is all-powerful, why doesn't He just say, "No more sin" and take it away or stop it! First, let me say I believe that God restrains evil all the

time. No telling how many times God has protected you from evil in ways that you have never seen. No telling how many times the unseen hand of God has provided you with enough strength or enough courage or enough insight to step away from evil and you didn't realize that it was God at work. But the bigger question is, "Why doesn't He just stop it completely? Here is what I want to say about that. Just because He hasn't doesn't mean He won't someday. The Bible assures us that the day is coming when evil will be put to a stop and the workers and believers of wickedness will be stopped. Proverbs 11:21 "*Count on this. The wicked won't get off free and God's loyal people will triumph.*" Or Proverbs 24:20 "*The evil have no future. Their life will be snuffed out.*" That's why there's a place called hell. That's why the Bible talks about hell a lot.

But the Bible says there is a place where evil doers and workers of wickedness will spend eternity. It is called Hell. Well then why doesn't God just put a stop to pain suffering and evil right now and let's get on with the good life living with God in Heaven?" The reason is some of you here today. The reason 25 years ago was me that the reason He hasn't yet. 2 Peter 3:9 "*God is restraining Himself on account of you, holding back the end because He doesn't want anyone lost. He's giving everyone space and time to change.*" God in His mercy, God in His love, God in His patience doesn't want to bring it all to a screeching halt, we'll let me say this, not just yet. Because He's wanting some of you to have just a little bit more time to consider the claims of Christ and turn to Him and be forgiven and enjoy a right relationship with Him.

There are Three Big principles that we looked at last week on this topic of suffering and evil.

1. We are very inconsistent on this topic of suffering and evil.
 2. When it comes to the question of evil and suffering. We wouldn't understand it all even if God explained it to us.
 3. We can ask, "Why?" But that won't help get us through. Or we can ask, "God to what end will You work this?" And then we'll be able to face the future with hope. That's where we'll find our hope.
- People ask me all the time, Is it ok to ask God Why? I say of course it's ok. That's why I put the first verse from the book of Mark, Jesus hang on the cross asked God Why? So apparently it's ok to do so. "*Why, God, did You forsake Me?*" But the passage from Hebrews we read: Hebrews 12:2-3 "*We are fixing our eyes upon Jesus who for the joy*

set before Him, endured the cross. Consider Him who has endured so that you may not grow weary and lose heart.”

Jesus did not stay in the past. He did not continue searching for the causes or the answers to His question, why. Instead what did He do? The Bible says He endured the cross because He looked ahead for the joy set before Him. It wasn't in the past, it wasn't in the question why God is this happening to me that gave Jesus hope. But to what end God was working for that gave Jesus hope. That's where Jesus found His hope.

We can place our hope in God. Why, Because God will be with us in life and He will be with us in death. God will be there when it seems like everything is coming together and God will be there when it seems everything is falling apart. And Jesus knew this while HE was on the

cross and it gave Him hope. For of the joy that was set before Him He was able to endure the cross.

What was Jesus hoping for that gave Him such joy? Jesus knew in the end to which God was working towards there was the resurrection. He knew He would die. He knew He would suffer. But He also knew that this wasn't the end because beyond that Jesus knew God had a plan, a bigger plan. And that's why He didn't stay in the question of why, why me... why is this happening to me but instead Jesus went on looking at: "What end are you God working in this..? What I am saying is when you start to believe that even while you suffer God is at work. When you start to believe that God is doing something even in the midst of it all it brings hope to us as it did Jesus on the Cross. Christ suffered for us... So in our suffering God will bring forth goodness if we don't stay in the why but draw to Him.

That leaves us with three big decisions. The problem with evil and suffering began with free will and now the solution to all this is also found in you freely making certain decisions. Today we're going to look at the three big decisions .

1. You must decide to deal with the evil within you.

And make no mistake about it. There is evil in you. And there's evil in me. Romans 7:21 Paul said, *"I need something more for if I know the law and still can't keep it and the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions I obviously need help. I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it but I can't do it. I decide to do good but I don't really do it. I decide not to do bad and then I do it anyway. My decisions such as they are don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time."*

Paul was a Jewish person. He wrote these words in Romans 3 to Jewish individuals. *"So where does that put us? Do we Jews get better break than the others? Not really. Basically all of us, whether insiders or outsiders start out in identical conditions which is to say that we all start out as sinners. Scripture leaves no doubt about it."*

There's nobody living right. Not even one. Nobody who knows the score, nobody alert for God. They've all taken the wrong turn. They've all wandered down blind allies."

There's evil within you and you don't have the ability to control it by yourself. That's why you need God's help. That's why Jesus faced evil and faced pain and faced suffering on this earth and on that cross. He took all of your sin and all of your evil upon Himself and He died. He died to pay a price for that, that you and I can't pay. And three days later He arose from the dead, proving He was God's Son, worthy of our devotion, powerful enough to help us.

That's why we must decide personally, individually, to come before Him and say, "Jesus, I need You to take care of the evil in me. I'm asking You to forgive me for my sins. I need Your help leading my life." It has to be a personal decision that you make.

2. You must decide to defeat evil where you can.

I love how Peter wrote it in 1 Peter 3 "*Summing up, be agreeable, be sympathetic, be loving, be compassionate, be humble. That goes for all of you. No exceptions. No retaliation. No sharp tongue sarcasm. Instead, bless. That's your job. You'll be a blessing and also get a blessing. Whoever wants to embrace life and see the day fill up with good here's what you do. Say nothing evil or hurtful. Snub evil and cultivate good. Run after peace for all your worth. God looks on all this with approval.*

Listen and respond well to what He's asked. But He turns His back on those who do evil things."

That's why we challenge each of you to be available to your coworkers and your friends and your neighbors who are encountering suffering and pain and evil in their own lives. Because we alone have the unique ability of infusing God's hope and God's love and God's presence and God's power into other human lives. The need has never been greater. I would challenge you to leave this room today committed to turning back evil wherever you find it with God's help.

3. You must decide to depend on God even when you hurt.

Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6:13 "*Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.*" That means when we're facing evil, having confronted it, having experienced it, Jesus is teaching us to depend on God to deliver us. Paul gives similar encouragement in 2 Corinthians 4 "*We have been surrounded and battered by troubles, but we are not demoralized. We're not sure what to do but we know that God knows what to do. We've been spiritually terrorized but God hasn't left our side. We've been thrown down but haven't broken.*" He's saying, Trust God to sustain you.

In the Old Testament there's a story about a man named Job. His children were killed. His land and his crops were destroyed. His health was suffering and he was in terrible pain. Job experienced evil in ways that most of us will never understand. He questioned God about all of

it. He struggled to believe. He tried to make some sense of it. He tried to find a way to get a grip. I believe at his lowest moment he went after God pretty hard.

God could have respond to Job in couple of ways. He could have just smacked Job down and said, “How dare you question Me about this?” But God did not do that. He could have just remained silent and given no answer and Job was looking for an explanation for all of his suffering. But God didn’t give an explanation for the suffering.

Why? Because that’s not what Job needed.

Instead what God did was He spent chapters of the Bible recounting to Job all of God’s mighty works, all of God’s acts of creation, all of God’s acts of power. Because what Job needed then was a God who was powerful enough to trust and depend on. What Job needed then was not an answer to the question *Why?* But he needed a

reminder that God had not abdicated, that God had not left him, that God was still capable to work. And what did God want from Job? He just wanted Job to trust Him.

So I didn’t attempt to answer the question *Why?* Hope and help are not found there, in the why anyway. Rather He brought Job to a moment of decision. Job, what will you do with the suffering when it comes? Will you still trust Me? Questions about the cause, those have to lie in the domain of God.

But the response that we give to suffering that’s our decision. So let me ask you, will you choose to believe that God is at work in you and God is at work around you? Will you choose to believe that the hurt will soon be over? In the scope of it all, it will soon be over. Will you choose to believe that an eternity still waits all those who put those

trust and hope in God. Will you believe that it's there for you if you just trust God?

Prayer:

I wonder today, if you would like to decide to have all the sins and all the evil that's in you forgiven by God. Washed away. Would you decide today to ask for God's help in facing suffering with hope and with strength? If so, then I'd like you to say this prayer after me. Say it quietly to God. "God, I'll admit it. I don't understand it all. I don't believe I can. I'm not God. That's why I need You in my life. I need Your help to deal with the evil within me. I need forgiveness for the evil of my life. I need help trying to transform suffering and evil into something good. I need Your power, God. And I want to live the life You created me to live. Though I know there will be suffering and things I don't understand I'm deciding to trust You today. I'm deciding today, as much as I know how, to put my life and my future in Your hands. Amen.

Message Notes

WHY IS THERE EVIL AND SUFFERING? Frequently Asked Questions - Part 4

Mark 15:33, 34 "And when the sixth hour had come, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour and Jesus cried out with a loud voice... 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'" NAS

Hebrews 12: 2, 3 "...fixing our eyes on Jesus...who for the joy set before Him endured the cross...consider Him who has endured...so that you may not grow weary and lose heart." NAS

[Review](#)

I. THREE BIG QUESTIONS

#1: Why is there so much suffering and evil in the world?

#2: Is there an evil spirit at work in the world?
John 10:10 James 1:14, 15

#3: Why doesn't God put a final stop to evil?
Proverbs 11:21 Proverbs 24:20 II Pt. 3:9

[Review](#)

II. THREE BIG PRINCIPLES

#1: We are very _____ on this topic

#2: We wouldn't understand it all, even if He _____ it to us. *Isaiah. 55:8, 9*

#3: We can ask "Why?" But that won't help. Or we can ask, "God, to what end will You work this?" And we'll face the future with _____.

What Does God Do When We Suffer:

- He Draws Us to Himself
- He Develops Character Within Us
Romans 5:3
- He Deepens our Perspective
II Corinthians 4:17 Romans 8:18

[Today's Message](#)

III. THREE BIG DECISIONS

#1. Deal with the _____.
Romans 7:21

#2. Defeat evil _____.
I Peter. 3:6-12

#3. Depend on God, _____.
Matthew 6:13 II Corinthians 4:8