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THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

Jas 5:13b
Lesson #25
Gratitude in Suffering
08/22/2021

“Satan’s greatest challenge to the Christian faith is the seemingly senseless suffering of those who follow it.”


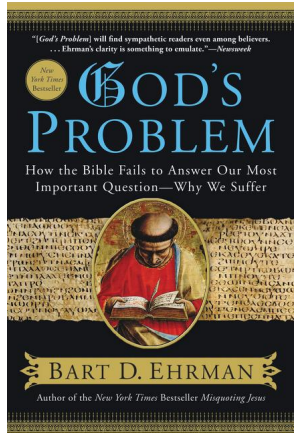
C.S. Lewis



1

“Why the Bible Fails to Answer our Most Important Question – Why we Suffer?”

“I just began to lose it. It wasn’t for lack of trying. But I just couldn’t believe there was a God in charge of this mess.”

Could it be that the Biblical answer is clear but we choose to reject it? 2


1 Peter 4

“12 Beloved, do not be **surprised** at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your **testing**, as though *something strange* were happening to you; 13 but to the degree that you **share the sufferings of Christ**, keep on **rejoicing**, so that at the **revelation of His glory** you may also rejoice and be overjoyed.”

James 1:2

“**Consider** it all joy, my brethren, **when** you encounter **various** trials,”

What is our theology of death / suffering?




3

James Kingdom Living in a Broken World

This is what we should know	This is what we should do		
Christians are chosen aliens in a broken world. 1:1-18	“quick to hear” “Listen up” 1:19-2:13	“slow to speak” “Shut up” 2:14-3:12	“slow to anger” “Cool it” 3:13-5:20

James 1:19

How are we to respond to suffering?
“Slow to anger”, Pray and Sing praises?



4

James (like Peter and Paul) is a life coach for **Christian Aliens** living in a hostile world.

James 5

“13 Is anyone among you suffering? *Then* he must pray.
Petition God. (last week)

Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.”
Praise God. (this week)

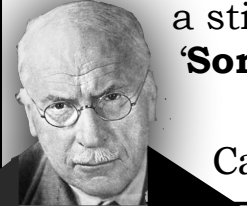
How can we praise God in the midst of this mess?

5

How can we praise God **in the midst of this mess?**

1. See suffering / death as **Visual Aids.**

"Through pride we are ever deceiving ourselves. But deep down below the surface of the average conscience a still, small voice says to us, '**Something is out of tune**.'"



Carl Jung

6

"God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

C.S. Lewis



7

"As an atheist I believed that everything that made my life exciting and worth living was an illusion and that reality (philosophical materialism) was in the end intolerably boring."

C.S. Lewis



8



Richard Dawkins

(British evolutionary biologist)

"Blindness to suffering is an inherent consequence of natural selection. Nature is neither kind nor cruel but indifferent."

Dawkins' natural mind would do well to listen to his (natural) heart.

9



Richard Dawkins

(British evolutionary biologist)

"I stand in awe of the wonder of life and can but offer humble thanks for the gift of being a part of the cosmos."

Where does his "awe" come from and where does his "thanks" go to?

10

"My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust?"

C.S. Lewis



11

How can we praise God **in the midst of this mess?**

2. See suffering / death as **foundational.**

“Suffering is actually at the heart of the Christian story.”



Tim Keller

12

With respect to our suffering:

“The cross is God taking on flesh and blood and saying, “Me too.”

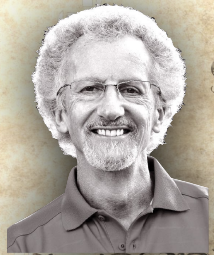
Rob Bell



13

“Any discussion of how pain and suffering fit into God’s scheme ultimately leads back to **the cross.**”

Philip Yancey



14



His movie depicting the crucifixion of Jesus was panned by many for linking Jesus death with the Jewish community of the 1st century **and for misunderstanding Jesus' significance in history.**



Mel Gibson

15

Christianity is the only religion that celebrates the death of its founder



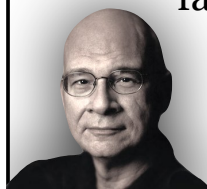
and calls its participants to be living sacrifices.

16

How can we praise God **in the midst of this mess?**

3. See suffering / death as a **Platform.**

“Though Christianity does not provide the reason for each experience of pain, it provides deep resources for actually facing suffering with hope and courage rather than bitterness and despair.”



Tim Keller

17

How can we praise God **in the midst of this mess?**

3. See suffering / death as a **Platform.**

“Take our baptism seriously, knowing that God will.”



**Affirm our
Alien status
in this world.**

18

**We are united with Christ's death
so as to become living sacrifices.**

Romans 6

“3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus **have been baptized into his death?** . . . 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.”

Romans 12:1

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice**, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship,”

19

Baptism moves our identity from the way of this world to the **Way of the Cross**

This involves **both challenges and choices.**



20

“I remembered this basic religious principle that God isn't there to take away our suffering or our pain but to fill it with his presence.”

Anne Lamott



21

Psalms 23

“1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters. 3 He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.”

**I need not fear
circumstances**

4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I fear no evil, for You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; my cup overflows.

6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

22

**Paul's prayer for chosen aliens
in a hostile world.**

Ephesians 1

“18 I pray that the **eyes of your heart may be enlightened**, so that you may know what is the **hope** of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His **inheritance** in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His **power** toward us who believe. . . .”

**Follow Jesus, who faced the Cross
knowing what was behind it and beyond it.**

23

Ephesians 3

"¹⁴ For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be **strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man**; ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in **love**, ¹⁸ may be able to **comprehend** with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be **filled up to all the fullness of God**."

Follow Jesus, who prayed that his followers **would know (and show) the love of God as he did.**

24

Philippians 4 (from Paul while in prison)

"⁴ **Rejoice in the Lord always**; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵ Let your **forbearing spirit** be known to all men. The Lord is near. ⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with **thanksgiving** let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the **peace** of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your **hearts** and your **minds** in Christ Jesus."

Joy, forbearance, and thankfulness (under difficult circumstances) are heart and mind issues that the world will not understand.

25

Joy, forbearance, and thankfulness (under difficult circumstances) are the Way of the Cross that disciples should understand.

1 Thessalonians 5

"¹⁶ Rejoice always; ¹⁷ pray without ceasing; ¹⁸ **in everything give thanks**; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

John 17:23

"I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and **didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me**."

26

2 Corinthians 4

"⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves; ⁸ we are . . . ¹⁰ **always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body**. ¹¹ **For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh**. ¹² **So death works in us, but life in you**."

Spiritual Power is revealed in our joy as we find peace in sharing Christ's suffering.

27

The secular world wants the love of Jesus **without the Cross**.

The evangelical world wants the Word of the Cross **without the Way of the Cross**.

28

When suffering comes, we long for a sign from God,

forgetting we have just had one and face an opportunity for another.

29

Four ways to mess up.

- *Make promises when you are high.*
- *Make decisions when you are low.*
- *Speak when you are angry.*
- ***Shut up when you are thankful.***

30

“In this life we
carry a cross
on our way to
a banquet.”



Clark Pinnoch

31