

Intro: Stefan Duerksen, Lead Pastor **PRAY FOR OFFERING**

**Church-Wide Prayer: 4. Church Renewal: Double funding, mentors & CRI Churches in Canada**

- **Burma/Myanmar Set Free** THIS PAST WEEKEND!! PTL!! 50 ppl in attendance!
- Equipping Conference : Things to Come! Pray for P.Ray as he completes
- Pray for the Church to ‘stay awake’ as we await Jesus’ return!
- Praise the Lord for the many lives transformed through Set Free and Mentoring!
- Increased funding for expansion into new countries & regions
- Director for India

**Intro: what do you think the greatest challenge to our faith is?** The new sexual ethic? Proving God’s existence? Reliability of the Bible? No. We have good reasons for all of these questions.

**It’s the problem of evil in the world. Norm Geisler put it this way, “if God, why evil?”**

Evil comes in many forms: pain, suffering, immorality, tragedy, death, natural disasters, and more.

**Prayer & Fasting** – many of us are bringing impossible circumstances to the Lord! Beseeching him for breakthroughs, miracles, power, strength, perspectives, wisdom and more!

How do we respond when we encounter suffering that makes no sense to us? **How do we persevere through life’s storms?**

**John 16:33 (ESV)** I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

**MESSAGE TITLE: Persevering through Storms**

This topic has shipwrecked people’s faith. It has also been the main argument against God’s existence. And it has left believers living in despair.

**IT NEEDS MORE THAN ONE SERMON TO COVER THE MANY QUESTIONS RAISED.**

**A. The problem of evil – Pain, suffering, tragedy, sin & death**

Evil comes in many forms. But can be put into **two main types**:

- 1) Moral evil** – think sin, mass shootings, theft, lying, abuse, and more.
- 2) Natural evil** – tsunamis, droughts, sickness, death.

The Bible is not a stranger to the problem of evil & suffering. In fact, it is quite clear about its origin. The solution. And God’s plan to redeem & restore us.

**Acts 14:22 (ESV)** strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

**Philippians 1:29 (ESV)** For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,

**1 Peter 5:6–11 (ESV)** <sup>6</sup> Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, <sup>7</sup> casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you... Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. <sup>10</sup> And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

**We are told to expect trouble – evil – AND we are told that the suffering is LIMITED in time.**

**Viktor Frankl's "Mans Search for Meaning".**

Viktor Frankl was a holocaust survivor who was also a psychologist. He specialized in helping people with mental illness and in suicide prevention. In 1938, Nazi's forced him to shut his practice because he was a Jew.

- He spent 3 years in four different concentration camps: Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, Kaufering, and Turkeim.
- He lost his father, mother, brother and wife during that time.
- He experienced and witnessed the worst type of dehumanizing, abuse, that humans can suffer.
- I was confronted with the impossibility of what so many millions experienced through the Holocaust.
- The victims of the Holocaust experienced Moral Evil & Natural Evil brought on by M.E.

**Charles Templeton in Lee Strobel's book, Case for Faith.**

- Charles Templeton and Billy Graham were partners in Evangelism, until Charles rejected his faith. Strobel, sought to understand why.
- Templeton wrote a book entitled, "Farewell to God: My reasons for leaving the faith."
- In it he detailed his many issues with the Bible and what he thought was a conflict between faith and reason.
- Strobel's interview revealed the source of his rejecting the faith. It was creation, or science, no!
- It was evil – natural evil.
- Templeton saw a picture in Life magazine showing a North African mother holding her dead child in her arms as she looked up to heaven.
- Templeton could reconcile this with God, especially not a GOOD GOD. All she needed was rain.
- Templeton struggled to understand NATURAL EVIL.

**Stefan's story:** My mom got sick when I was 10 years old and we believed she could die. She was in horrible pain and endured 10 brain surgeries and continues to live with awful headaches.

- I couldn't reconcile how a good God could do this to my mom!
- They had been faithful! Why wouldn't he heal her? One snap of the finger and she'd be well!
- I struggled with the purpose of NATURAL EVIL.

**The (FALSE) problem of evil then, can be summarized as follows:** *Geisler, Norman L.. If God, Why Evil?: A New Way to Think About the Question (p. 46). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.*

1. An all-good God must have a good purpose for everything.
2. But there is no good purpose for some (i.e., useless or innocent) suffering.
3. Hence there cannot be an all-good God. (Or he does not exist!)

**THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT HAPPENED TO ME! Though logical, is this true?**

**Romans 8:28 (ESV)** <sup>28</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

**John 9:1–3 (ESV)** As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

- Natural evil: here it existed, NOT due to personal sin, but for the glory of God!

**2 Corinthians 4:16–18 (ESV)** <sup>16</sup> So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup> as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

**No knowing the purpose for some evil does not mean there is no purpose. It simply acknowledges our limited understanding of its purpose.**

- **FOR BIBLICAL PURPOSES OF SUFFERING SEE P. RAYS message on suffering in Nov/2024**

**An all-good God & the presence of evil (*Norm Geisler*):**

1. That we don't know a good purpose for evil does not mean there is none. (Rom 8:28)
2. An all-good God knows a good purpose for everything (including evil).
  - Some evil seems to us to have no good purpose.
  - But an all-good God has a good purpose for everything.
  - So even evil that seems to have no good purpose does have a good purpose.
3. Therefore, there is a good purpose for all suffering, even that which we cannot now explain.

## **B. Finding Purpose within Suffering**

**Victor Frankl famously came up with this equation to help us understand the problem of suffering.**

**D=S-M or Despair comes from suffering without meaning.**

Those who found meaning and purpose were able to bear up under the impossible hardship they faced.

**Frankl was NOT a Christian and yet he discovered something profound regarding meaning & suffering.**

- Meaning could be found in our ability to CHOOSE.
- You could CHOOSE to love & help those around you.
- You could CHOOSE to respond to the suffering in a way that reflected your morals & values.
- Meaning provided strength to endure suffering.

**Romans 5:3–5 (ESV)** Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

- **Suffering – Good Purpose – Produced by the power of the Holy Spirit in you!**

**Evil – regardless of its pervasiveness cannot remove our primary purpose: to KNOW GOD**

**(William Laine Craig) The chief purpose of life is not happiness, but the knowledge of God.**

**Acts 17:26–27 (ESV)** And he made from one man every nation of ... that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,

**2 Peter 3:9** the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise. But is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

**EVIL has an expiry date. ALL suffering is TEMPORARY. JESUS IS COMING BACK.**

### **C. Persevering through Storms**

Victor Frankl found meaning in choosing to respond and live in alignment with his morals & values

Charles Templeton – when asked about Jesus, softened, welled up with tears and said, “I MISS HIM”. But he would not choose to TRUST HIM. He needed to KNOW HIS ANSWERS FIRST.

My story: as I look back on my mom getting sick... I can see how God was already preparing ME for what I am doing today. My mom can see how God used it as a catalyst for prayer, grew her character, helped many others going through suffering!

EVIL – is impossibly hard! Painful! Rejection – depression – failure – sickness – loss of health – loneliness – death – loss – financial ruin – Abuse – anxiety – abandonment.

**Revelation 21:4 (ESV)** He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

**READ: 2 Corinthians 1:3–11; 2 Corinthians 4:16–18; Romans 8:28; Hebrews 10:35; Revelation 21:4**

**Knowing God Chief Priority – then trusting Him as you seek answers**

- 1. Prayer – to know God! – praise, intercession, requests, warfare, strength!**
- 2. Fasting – to know God! – strengthen prayers, focus, dependency on God!**
- 3. Scripture – to know God! – wisdom, empathy, comfort, correction, direction!**
- 4. Church – to know God! – support, prayer, lean on each other!**
- 5. Worship – to know God! – worship is a weapon – declare, cry, sing your heart out to God!**

And like Job, Paul, Jeremiah, Peter and JESUS! Your suffering and RESPONSE will echo to those around you! This is how we PERSEVERE THROUGH STORMS.

**SPECIAL: Praise you in the Storm**

**AFTER SERVICE PRAYER – PRAYER ROOM – 9AM and 11AM**

**MARANATHA!! Come soon Lord!**

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**SC CHURCH WIDE PRAYER REQUESTS 2024**

**Cruise ship → → → → → Battleship**

- 1. Life on Mission:** Churchwide commitment to "Each One, Reach One"
- 2. Heart of Southland:** 500 people - Prayer Summit, Set Free! & Bible in a year
- 3. Next Gen:** ❤️ Passion for Jesus, memorization & find identity in Christ
- 4. Church Renewal:** Double funding, mentors & CRI Churches in Canada
- 5. Persecuted Church & Israel:** Salvation, hope & perseverance - MARANATHA!