

Part 4 of the current series

Today's title: **Unquestionable LOVE
And the question of SUFFERING**

Text: John 11:32-37

Verses 36-37: *³⁶ Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" ³⁷ And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"*

To some of the Jews present, the love of Jesus was unquestionable, it was quite evident. What they couldn't understand was the situation of Lazarus and why Jesus hadn't done anything to keep him from dying.

In order to understand suffering, we need to go back right to the beginning of creation and see where evil might have originated.

1. "In the beginning God" ...

Genesis 1:1

The world began with God. Man began with God. What God began He also blessed and everything had beauty and perfection.

- 6 times the Bible says that "God saw that it was good". A seventh time we read that God saw that "*indeed it was very good*" (v.31)
- God created perfection, and everything had the seal of His goodness.
- In verse **22** He blessed the work of creation. In verses **26-28**, He created mankind and blessed them (the curse only came later).
- 'The beginning' reflected accurately the plan and intent of God: there was no record of death, decay, lack, sickness, sorrow etc.

2. "Now the serpent"...

Genesis 3:1

Chapter one starts with God but chapter 3 introduces an interruption to the plan of God – ...'now the serpent'. Apart from God and Man, there is a third agent in the story. He is often forgotten when discussing suffering: the devil.

a) Something happened at the beginning that changed everything forever

1 John 3:8 says that the devil sinned from the beginning; **John 8:44** says that the devil was a murderer from the beginning. The devil also begun with God, but he rebelled against God and took 1/3 of angels with him. God had to cast him out of heaven and stripped him off everything he had.

- b) ***“Now the serpent”*** – Now the serpent comes to disrupt and pervert the plan of God. He came to gain control of the world and receive the allegiance of man to subjugate him.

Man had the authority to cast the serpent out of the garden. God gave him “dominion”. However, instead of casting the devil out, Adam made the wrong decision, sinned and lost the world to satan.

God had created man as a free moral agent and not a puppet. God created man with the ability to decide and he ended up making the worst decision in the history of mankind.

c) **Adam brought upon himself and all of us, 8 immediate consequences:**

- Genesis 3:8 – breaking of fellowship with God (separation)
- V.10 – Fear
- V. 16 – Sorrow
- V.16 – Pain
- V.17 – Curse replaced the blessing
- V.18 – Difficulties of all kind
- V.19 – Death

All of these things entered the planet because of one man’s disobedience.

d) **All of that happened and satan became the ‘god of this world’**

2 Corinthian 4:4 - *“whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them”.*

Luke 4:5-6: 5 *Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said to Him, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me and I give it to whomever I wish.*

1 John 5:19 - *We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. (in the NIV: ... ‘under the control’)*

Offense towards God does not make sense because God is not the author of evil. Not everything that happens in this world is God’s will - like Job thought. Job did not know that there was a devil and that is the reason why he blamed God for his misfortune and for everything bad in the world:

Job 9:22-24 MEV - *It is all one thing; therefore, I said, ‘He destroys both the perfect and the wicked.’ If the whip kills suddenly, He will laugh at the trial of the innocent. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked. He covers the faces of its judges. If it is not He, then who is it? –*

In Job’s mind at this point, God is the author of every bad thing on earth. However, we have an advantage that he didn’t have. Job couldn’t pick up a Bible and read Job 1,2 and 3 and read that it was satan who attacked his life. *If it is not He, then who it is? – satan.*

Ok. So, God is not the author of evil and calamities. But why does He allow them? Why does God allow the world to be as it is?

Ultimately all the suffering and evil in the world came because of Adam's wrong decision. It would be a contradiction for God to give man **free will** and the ability to **decide** and then to interfere with the *consequences* of his decision. If He allowed us to *decide*, then He had to allow the *consequences* of our decisions also. The opposite would be a contradiction. That is why we should never blame God. We sinned – not God.

...“In the beginning God” ..., ...“now comes the serpent”... but the story didn't end there:

3. Jesus, the new beginning

Jesus came to give us a new beginning:

Colossians 1:18 says **18** *And He is the head of the body, the church, **who is the beginning**, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.*

Rev. 1:8 says that Jesus is *“the Alfa and the Omega, **the Beginning** and the end”*.

Jesus came because of 3 basic reasons:

1. To give us a new beginning
2. To allow us to choose again
3. To destroy the works of the devil

1 John 3:8b – *“For this purpose the Son of man was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil”*

Jesus came to destroy everything the devil brought in with him. That is what He did with Lazarus (He brought life into his decaying body). That is what he did everywhere He went.

Acts 10:38 – *“how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him”*.

Luke 4:18,19 - *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”*

Everywhere He went He only did good. He didn't bring any sickness from heaven to give because there is no sickness in heaven:

“And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak”.

Mark 7:37

Conclusion:

God is not the author of evil. In the beginning, when the planet was a perfect expression and manifestation of God's will, there was no suffering. Suffering entered, not by the will of God but as a result of man falling into the temptation of the devil. Adam surrendered to the wrong 'god' and we are still reaping its consequences.

The first Adam failed, but not Jesus. Jesus came to give us the ability to choose again and be free from satan's authority, forever.

Some helpful books to better understand today's topic (apart from the ones we recommended last week):

"Why is God so mad at me?" by Pat Schatzline (Charisma House)

"PUSH" by Jurgen Matthesius (Thomas Nelson Publishers)