

God Answers Man's Suffering: Calvary

by Warren Wiersbe

God's final answer to every question and problem of life is Calvary, where He takes all the other answers and makes them possible.

Duration: 42:20

Topics: "Suffering And Evil", "The Cross"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of suffering and conflict in the world. He emphasizes that there is a battle between the forces of God and Satan, and as believers, we are part of this battle. The preacher then focuses on the crucifixion of Jesus and how it brought an end to the conflict. He highlights that Jesus' death on the cross defeated Satan and spoiled his power. The preacher encourages listeners to look to Calvary as a reminder of God's love and victory over evil.

Transcript

We read the word of God from Matthew chapter 27 beginning at verse 27. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers and they stripped him and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns they put it upon his head and a reed in his right hand and they bowed the knee before him and mocked him saying, Hail King of the Jews.

And they spat upon him and took the reed and smote him on the head. And after they had mocked him they took the robe off from him and put his own raiment on him and led him away to crucify him. And as they came out they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, him they compelled to bear his cross.

And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say a place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall and when he had tasted it he would not drink. And they crucified him and parted his garments casting lots that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet. They parted my garments among them and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

And sitting down they watched him there and set up over his head his accusation written, This is Jesus the King of the Jews. And now to verse 45. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani, that is to say my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there when they heard that said, This man calleth for Elijah. And straightway one of them ran and took a sponge and filled it with vinegar and put it on a reed and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.

Jesus when he had cried again with a loud voice yielded up the spirit. And behold the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom and the earth did quake and the rocks were split and the graves were opened. And many bodies of the saints that slept were raised and came out of the graves after his resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared unto many.

Now when the centurion and they that were with him watching Jesus saw the earthquake and those things that were done, they feared greatly saying, Truly this was the Son of God. These are the facts of his crucifixion. May the Holy Spirit help us to learn the truths of his crucifixion.

God's final answer to every question and problem of life is Calvary. At Calvary he answered the sin question. Why doesn't a holy God judge sin and how can a holy God forgive sinners? And that question was answered at Calvary.

At Calvary our great God answered the question of sovereignty. For when men were doing their worst God was accomplishing his will without denying human responsibility. At the cross God exercised divine sovereignty and accomplished the greatest deed ever accomplished.

And at the cross of Jesus Christ God answered the suffering question. Why is there human suffering in the world? Does God even care that people are suffering? Let's be clear on what happened at Calvary. At Calvary you don't have the martyrdom of a failure.

At Calvary you do not have the murder of a fanatic. At Calvary you have the good shepherd laying down his life for the sheep. At Calvary you have the Lamb of God slain for the sins of the world.

At Calvary you have God commending his love toward us. We've been looking for these past several weeks at the question of suffering in this world. God's answers to man's suffering.

And we come now to the seventh of these answers, Calvary. God's final and complete answer to suffering is at Calvary. And I'll tell you why.

At Calvary the Lord Jesus Christ takes all of the other answers that we have discussed and he fulfills them, he makes them possible, he illustrates them to us. If you have been following with me in this study you will know that we have found six answers that God gives to us to help us understand, experience, and benefit from the sufferings of life. We've learned during these weeks that life is not easy and God never expected life to be easy.

We've learned that God has said to us here are six clear answers that help you understand why suffering is in this world. And now in this final message as we go to Calvary we're going to find the Lord Jesus Christ reaching out, embracing all of these answers and then making it possible for us to use them in our own lives. The first answer that we considered was the answer of creation.

Why is there suffering in this world? Because creation is groaning and travailing in pain. Creation is in bondage. We went back to the book of Genesis and there we were confronted with thorns and sweat and dust.

I suppose these three items best symbolize what's going on in creation today. Thorn and sweat. By the sweat of your brow you're going to toil.

And dust. You came from the dust, said the Lord, and now you're going to return to the dust. And so as man is in creation today, man is a part of bondage and travail.

And we are groaning and all of creation is groaning according to Romans chapter 8. And then we come to Calvary and what do you find? Thorns and sweat and dust. Thorns. Some soldier got the bright idea that if he's the king he ought to wear a crown.

And so they went and got some thorns that were growing around there and they wove them together and they made a crown. And they pressed upon the brow of the Creator the very thorns that came into creation because of man's sin. And Jesus wore a crown of thorns.

It's as though He is saying, alright, I accept this. I didn't make creation this way. I did not make man or the world to have suffering and toil.

But that's the way sin has made it. I'm not guilty but I'll accept it. I'm not to blame but I'll receive it.

And He received upon His perfect brow a crown of thorns. As though He is bearing on His body the curse of creation. We visit Him in the garden and He's sweating.

Peter was so cold that night he had to stand by a fire and warm himself. But Jesus was perspiring and our Lord Jesus sweat as it were great drops of blood. Not mere human perspiration because of exertion but as it were a sacrifice, as it were saying, alright, man toils, man labors, man sweats and I'm going to enter into that.

And I'm going to do the greatest work ever done. I'm going to do something no man could do individually and all men could not do collectively. I'm going to give myself on the cross.

Dust. My Lord fell on His face in the garden and prayed. Have you read Psalm 22 lately to see what Jesus had to say about His own crucifixion? Better read it.

In Psalm 22 and verse 15 the Lord Jesus says prophetically through David, Thou hast brought me to the dust of death. Now our Lord's body did not see corruption. Our Lord's body did not turn to dust.

God miraculously preserved that body and He arose in a glorified body. But our Lord entered into the dust of death. And so when you go to Calvary and you look at the Son of God with a crown of thorns and sweating drops of blood and falling face forward into the dust and entering into the dust of death, you say creation will one day be delivered.

The Creator has died for His creation. And you notice something else. You notice that when Jesus died on the cross, all of creation sympathized with Him.

The sun refused to shine. Well, might the sun in darkness hide? And it did. It's as though God reached out and put a veil over the light and said He's entering into the darkness.

He's going through hell for mankind. And the sun just didn't shine. And then the earth began to shake.

And the earth was rampant. The tombs were open. Heaven and earth sympathized with the Creator when He died on the cross.

Don't you ever blame God for sickness and tears and death? These are not His creations. Rather, go to Calvary and realize that He went through the dust of death. That He entered into the darkness of hell.

That one day all of creation might be delivered. You get to the book of Revelation, you find that wonderful statement, There shall be no more death. There is no more curse.

The former things are passed away. And then says the Word of God, It is done. I'll tell you where it was done.

It was done at the cross. The next time you find yourself in the bondage and the travail of just being human in a world that is filled with sorrow, go to Calvary. Because at Calvary you'll see the Creator delivering His creation.

Our second answer to suffering was conflict. There's a battle going on. From the very beginning of sin, God declared war on Satan.

You serpent, you're going to bite the dust. Oh, you may bite His heel, but He's going to crush your head. And history, my friend, is a great battle.

The forces of God battling against the forces of Satan. And we're part of that. Jesus said, He who is not with Me is against Me.

He who is not gathering with Me is scattering. The thief cometh not but for to steal and to kill and to destroy. Jesus said, I'm come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly.

Conflict. Now, what happened on the cross? On the cross, the conflict was ended. Oh, the skirmishes are still going on.

The mopping up operations are going on. There are a few battles, but the war has been won. On the cross, Jesus completely, finally defeated Satan.

As He was contemplating Calvary, our Lord said this, Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the prince of this world be cast out. How? And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, that means crucified.

If I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto Me. Satan has been drawing men. I'm going to defeat him.

The Apostle Paul in Colossians chapter 2 makes a marvelous statement about my Lord's work on the cross. Colossians chapter 2 and verse 15, Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. In what? In His cross.

He spoiled Satan. Now, you can't spoil an army until you defeat the army. When you've won the battle, then you go claim the spoils.

Jesus said to His disciples one day, If a strong man is guarding a house, you've got to bind the strong man. Then you go and take what's in his house. Well, the strong man was guarding the house, this house of this world.

Satan was the strong man guarding this house. And Jesus came in and He bound the strong man. And He defeated him.

And so when you go to the cross, you say, Hallelujah, He won the conflict. Hallelujah, the battle's been won. Hallelujah, the war is over.

Now, we as Christians enter into suffering, not from defeat, but from victory. We are not out fighting for victory. We are fighting from victory.

Can you recall, after World War II, how month after month after month, for over a year, and in one case, three years, they were finding enemy soldiers who didn't know the war was over. Remember that? Our men would go in, they'd find people who were in caves, starving, and they'd say, wait a minute, the war is over. I find Christians who are going through suffering and difficulty, and they say, God's fighting me, Satan's fighting me.

Oh no, the war is over. He's won the victory over Satan. Satan cannot get a victory in our lives unless we let him.

That's why Paul says, don't give place to the devil. Don't let him get a beachhead anywhere in your mind or your heart. If he moves in, he will use suffering to tear you down.

But if you'll trust in the Christ of Calvary, He, Jesus, will use suffering to build you up. And so at the cross, we find conflict finally settled. The third answer we discovered was character.

In Romans chapter 5, verses 3 and 4, tribulation works patience and patience experience and experience hope. That word experience means character. Why does God permit us to go through suffering? Sometimes we don't have to.

Sometimes God can build our character in other ways. And for that, we're grateful. But sometimes we have to go through the furnace.

Sometimes we have to go through the waters to build character. What does the cross have to say about character? The biggest problem in character is sin. You and I were born sinners.

We are not sinners because we sin. We sin because we're sinners. And character has been polluted by sin.

What did Jesus do on the cross? Well, not only did he pay the penalty for our sin, that means forgiveness, a clean conscience, our names written down in heaven, but he also broke the power of sin. We sing in one of our songs, He breaks the power of canceled sin. He sets the prisoner free.

His blood can make the foulest clean. His blood availed for me. The power of the cross is not just simply power to rescue us from hell.

The power of the cross is power to build character. In fact, Hebrews 2 and verse 10 informs me that Jesus Christ was made perfect through suffering. How can God be made perfect? Well, as far as his character is concerned, God is God.

He cannot be improved. That word made perfect means completed, brought to fulfillment, qualified. My Lord was going to enter into a new ministry, the God-man up in heaven, and to prepare him for that

ministry, he had to go through the cross.

And so not only did something happen to me at Calvary, something happened to Jesus at Calvary. He was equipped, qualified, prepared, fulfilled for that marvelous ministry of doing what? Building character. When you go to the cross, you find that there the power of sin has been broken.

Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that have died to sin? Where? At the cross. Live any longer therein.

For you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. Therefore, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God. That all happened at the cross.

Avoid the cross and you can't build Christian character. The power is not there. The fourth answer that we examined in this matter of human suffering is companionship.

We discovered that when God wants to draw close to us, he sometimes puts us in a narrow valley. We also discovered that when God wants us to draw closer to each other, he puts us through suffering. In 2 Corinthians chapter 1, Paul tells us that he went through all of this difficulty that we might be able to comfort other people.

Would you please look upon suffering not as waste, but as investment? Now, I know that when we hurt, when our hearts are broken and when everything has fallen apart, nobody wants to hear a lecture on theology. We hear words. I recall being at a funeral home many years ago.

A very close friend of mine had passed away and I was sitting there with some of the relatives and in came a good friend and a godly man. And he walked over and said to the wife of the deceased, I have come to help you celebrate the coronation. Now, I know what he meant, but he said it at the wrong time.

And she looked up and said, for you it may be coronation, but for me it's sorrow. Now, I know what she meant. She hurt.

Her heart was broken. And mentally she knew it was coronation, but emotionally it hurt and words just did not solve the problem. That's why you have companionship.

God says, when you're going through the water, I'll be with you. When you go through the fire, I'll be there. Fear thou not, for I am with thee.

Be not dismayed, for I am thy God. Have you noticed in your life, I know you have, that the greatest encouragement sometimes comes when someone is just standing there by your side saying nothing. Companionship.

Someone with an arm around you. Someone standing there. That's what God does.

And this is possible because of Calvary. God could not get close to me apart from Calvary. What does He want to come and be my companion for? What can I offer Him? Sinful.

God can't walk with me unless sin is taken care of. And this is what happened at Calvary. At Calvary, Jesus Christ entered into an experience of companionship with you and me.

The book of Hebrews talks about this. In fact, it's the whole theme of the book of Hebrews. The priesthood of our Lord Jesus.

Listen to this. Hebrews chapter 2 verse 17. Wherefore, in all things it behooved Him to be made like His brethren.

That's companionship. God with us. He took upon Him our nature.

He took upon Him our sins. That He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to help them that are being tempted.

That's companionship. And you're going through suffering and you're tempted to sin. Jesus draws nigh and He gets close to you and He says, I know what you're going through.

I've been through it. Over in Hebrews chapter 4, listen to these words. Seeing then that we have a great high priest, not just a priest, a high priest.

And not just any high priest, a great high priest that has passed through the heavens. Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. Doesn't say let's hold fast our salvation.

He takes care of that. Let's hold fast our confession. Let's be able to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Now how do you keep holding fast when you're going through the rapids of life and over the waterfalls and the winds are blowing? For we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. But was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, not a throne of judgment.

Were it not for Calvary, it would be a throne of judgment. But thank God it's a throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need. The literal Greek there is in the nick of time.

Find grace to help in the nick of time. My dear friend, at Calvary, God says companionship. I am with you in your suffering.

I'm even with you in your sin. And I'm going to be able to forgive you of your sin and walk with you and live in you. Is it not something strange that in order for Him to give me companionship with God, He lost God's companionship? My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? He was forsaken that I might never be forsaken.

God turned His back upon His own Son that He might turn His face toward me and receive me and be reconciled in Jesus Christ. Calvary says companionship. You say, I feel so alone in my suffering.

Nobody understands. I tell you, there's one hanging on a tree who understands. You say, but I hurt.

He hurt. But I feel alone. He was alone.

And we deserve it. He didn't. The fifth answer that we considered was the answer of chastening.

Hebrews chapter 12. Chastening means child training. Chastening is not a judge punishing a criminal.

Chastening is a father building a child. I was interested to see in the magazines that they are now teaching children to swim before they teach them how to walk. That's interesting.

I imagine when that child is thrust into that water, which is an alien environment for him, he says, you're trying to kill me. There are times in our lives when God thrusts us in. He takes away the water wings.

He takes away the pontoons. He breaks down the bridge. He says, swim.

There are times when God says, climb. Get moving on that mountain. Can't stay where you are.

We parents have to help our children mature. And the only way to help them to mature is to make life difficult occasionally. If we do everything for our children, they will get nothing.

They'll never grow. Hebrews chapter 12 says, look, when you're going through chastening, when the Father in love is chastening you, remember this, looking unto Jesus. That's what Calvary is all about.

I suppose the one statement I hear more than any other when people are going through suffering is this, Pastor, I don't think God loves me anymore. Ever heard that? You ever said that? I don't think God loves me anymore. We have a tendency to think that when the sky is bright, the flowers are blooming, and the bills are paid, and the blood is circulating, God loves us.

But let a cloud come across the sky. Let the rain begin to fall. Let the flowers wither.

Let the blood stop circulating. And we say God doesn't love us anymore. We have a tendency to believe that the love of God is wrapped up only in the circumstances of life.

And the devil loves that. That's the whole theme of the book of Job. Satan says to God, sure, he loves you and serves you because you've blessed him.

Wipe him out and see what he does. And I dare say there are some saints of God today who if they were wiped out, they'd shake their fist in the face of God. Because they love the gifts, but not the giver.

They're wrapped up in the blessings, but not the blesser. And the circumstances of life are their measurement of the blessings of God. And I go to Calvary and say, here is His Son.

Circumstances of life. Forsaken by His own disciples. Rejected by His own nation.

Ridiculed, mocked, spat upon. Crucified like a cheap, dirty, common criminal. God wears your love.

That is my love. But God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Satan comes to you and says, God doesn't love you anymore.

You're going through the chastening process. God doesn't love you anymore. Just go to Calvary.

That's what Hebrews 12 says. Don't give up. Don't faint.

Let's run with endurance, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. He started it. He'll finish it.

Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross. You say, I can't take one day more. Suppose you were hanging on a cross, chastening.

What was it that kept Jesus there? His love. What keeps us going? Our love for God. The cross does not tell me that God hates me.

The cross tells me that God loves me. For the joy that was set before Him. What joy is that? The joy of returning to glory and taking a church with Him.

Which leads us to the final answer that Calvary gives to us. Crowns. Suffering for the Christian can lead to glory.

Doesn't always lead to glory. That depends upon us. Suffering can make us better or suffering can make us bitter.

Suffering can lead to a crown or suffering can lead to defeat. All depends upon our faith in God. I'm sure when the early followers of our Lord were standing there at Calvary, they thought the whole thing was over.

That's what the Emmaus disciples said. We had hoped that it should be He that should restore Israel. He's dead.

Can you imagine? They saw Him hanging there in weakness, in shame. He'd lost all of His human rights and all of His civil rights. Looked as though He'd even lost His Father.

And yet, what was the result? Glory. That's what Jesus said to those men when He walked with them. He said, did it not behoove the Christ to suffer and then enter into His glory? The suffering can lead to glory if we wait upon the Lord in faith.

That's what Calvary says. Calvary says, good Friday's not the end. Wait.

And He came forth from that tomb in glory. He left behind those grave clothes. He came out in the glory clothes.

And all He carried with Him from Calvary were the wounds. Not scars. Wounds.

And He is in heaven today with wounds. And among other things, those wounds are saying suffering leads to glory in the will of God. If we don't rebel, if we submit, if we love, if we trust, then suffering leads to glory.

It did with Joseph. Thirteen years of rejection, humiliation, separation, lying. And He ended up in glory, seated upon a throne.

It was with David. Years of running and hiding in caves, chased by that evil king. And yet it ended up in glory.

So it was with Job. So it was with Jesus. Peter says, I am a witness of His suffering and the glory that followed.

And as you read 1 Peter, it is suffering, glory. Suffering, glory. I reckon that the sufferings of this present time, says Paul, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

And one day God is going to take your wounds and there is going to be glory. He will take your broken heart and there will be glory. And you will look back and you will see what God was laying in store for you.

When you went through the furnace and you went through the flood and you went through the fight and you were saying, God, where are you? And He is saying, I am laying up glory for you. That is what Calvary is all about. Calvary says to us once and for all, the only way to a crown is a cross.

But we don't like that. We want to go the easy way. And so Calvary gives us God's last word, God's final answer.

We are suffering sometimes because we are just creatures in a cursed creation. But at the cross, the curse of creation is broken. Sometimes we suffer because we are in a conflict with Satan.

But at the cross, the conflict was won. Sometimes we suffer because God has to build character. And at the cross, He broke the power of sin.

That you and I might become more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes we suffer because of companionship. God wants to draw close to us.

And at the cross, He did. He became a merciful and faithful high priest to sympathize and draw near. Sometimes we suffer because of chastening.

And when that happens, looking unto Jesus, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross. And sometimes we suffer because of crowns. God says, I want you to have something up in heaven.

I want to give you some glory up there when my Son appears. And that's what happened at the cross. First the cross, then the crown.

First the suffering, then the glory. First the tree, then the throne. First men at their worst, then God at His best.

The important thing about life is not escaping suffering or enduring suffering. The important thing about life is investing suffering so God can accomplish what He wants to accomplish in our lives. Now, let's stop being little children who think that God is punishing us.

Sometimes He does have to do that. Let's stop whimpering. Let's stop running away.

Let's stop trying to be insulated and isolated. The early Christians suffered. We're going to suffer.

We'll suffer because we're human beings. We'll suffer because we're Christian. We'll suffer because we're growing.

We'll suffer because we're going. But let's not whimper. Let's stand up like godly men and women.

And let's say with that man in the Old Testament who suffered far more than any other, Job. The Lord gave. The Lord takes away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. You see, my friend, we Christians suffer for someone. Unsaved people are suffering today for nothing.

And they're going to suffer for all eternity. I don't mind suffering today, be it physical, emotional, spiritual, as long as I know there's going to be no eternal suffering. I can't begin to think of what it means to suffer eternally.

To be separated from God's companionship, separated from God's presence, God's glory. Those of you who have never been saved will suffer eternally. Your biggest problem is not suffering now, it's suffering forever.

Oh, why don't you give your heart to Christ and be saved? And enter with us into the fellowship of His sufferings that leads to the fellowship of His glory. Thank you, Father, that even suffering can be taken by Your hand and made into something good and beautiful and eternal. Thank you that when men and circumstances and Satan are doing their worst, you can accomplish your best.

Thank you, Father, for not only saving us by the blood of Christ, but making us, molding us, preparing us through the power of Christ. I pray for those today who suffer, whether it be here in our congregation now or our radio congregation, those who are bearing pain and difficulty, may they go to Calvary and there see in Christ all the answers. And may we bow in submission and crown Him King of our lives.

I pray for those who are not saved that they might trust Christ and experience that wonderful salvation, eternal abundant life. Speak to hearts now, I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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