

Shaken and Found Faithful

The Problem of Pain, Evil and Suffering

Pastor Craig Sweeney | July 14, 2024

Question of the week: How do I make sense of the problem of pain, evil and suffering?

Thread: The Father's heart is literally rescuing humanity from itself.

Old Testament: "...the serpent...He said to the woman, 'Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'? And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing (understanding, intimate connection, to have knowledge of, skilled at, able to teach) good and evil.'" **Genesis 3:1 – 5 ESV**

The Father's heart was to spare us from bearing the weight of intimacy with evil.

"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths." **Genesis 3:6 – 7 ESV**

They willingly embraced a deception.

They felt shame.

- Sin and shame literally altered how they saw themselves.
- Sin and shame literally altered how they saw others.

Their immediate, carnal reaction was to fix themselves, to fix the situation.

"And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden."

Genesis 3:8 ESV

They knew their innovations only masked the problems.

They also felt themselves being unmasked in the presence of God.

"But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?' And he said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid,

because I was naked, and I hid myself.' He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.' Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'" **Genesis 3:9 – 13 ESV**

Though we know it's our sin, we instinctively blame others.

"The Lord God said to the serpent...And to Adam he said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of..., cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you...By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.'" **Genesis 3:14, 17-19 ESV**

We discover that Adam and Eve's best efforts only masked the real problem.

Romans 8:20 – 26, Romans 7:21 – 25 NLT

Is there a solution?

"Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin." **Romans 7:25 NLT**

"So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins...For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God...so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you...Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later." **Romans 8:1 – 3, 7 – 11, 18 NLT**

A better question: Will I trust God or my best ideas as I deal with the problem of pain, evil and suffering?

Challenge: Will I trust God or my best ideas as I deal with the problem of pain, evil and suffering?