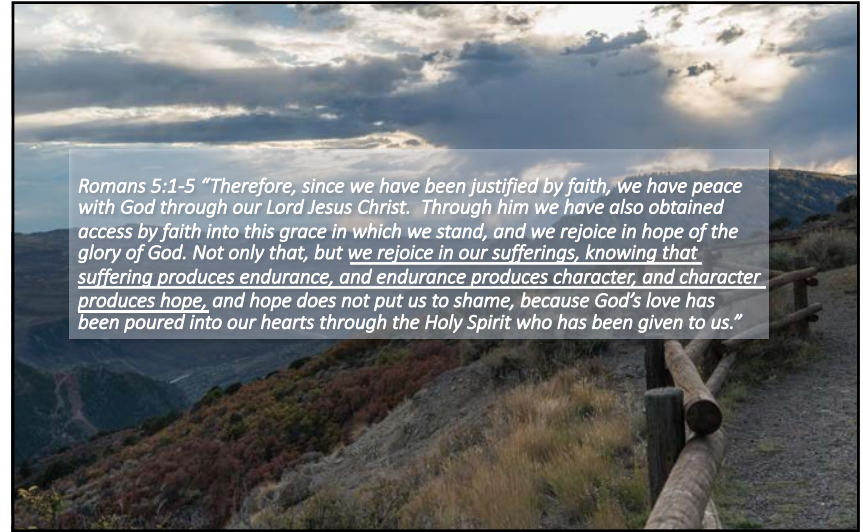




From Suffering to Hope Week 2:
Empowered by God's Word for the Journey

1



Romans 5:1-5 "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 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."

2

<p>A Journey Together from Suffering to Hope: Four Scripturally-grounded Spiritual Steps</p>	<p>Week 1: Suffering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biblical response to suffering (and its contrast) • Spiritual practice in suffering
	<p>Week 2: Perseverance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scriptural portrait of perseverance (and its contrast) • Spiritual practices integral to building perseverance
	<p>Week 3: Character</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scriptural portrait of character (and its contrast) • Scriptural practices in the development of Christ-centered character
	<p>Week 4: Hope</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scriptural portrait of hope (and its contrast) • Scriptural practices cultivating hope (and joy)

3

Week 2. Perseverance

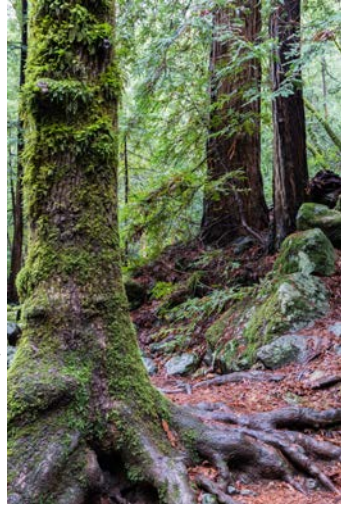
Suffering

4

What is perseverance?

Learning from the redwoods...

- Known for their massive size/height and yet their incredible ability to stand and endure winds, earthquakes, fires etc.
- Root growth into the soil (furthered by stress), provides not only more strength, but also more access to nutrients → tree growth
- Growth also causes roots to become more intertwined with fellow tree roots around it. Redwoods have a beautiful way of sharing strength and nutrients with one another, why they ALWAYS grow in groves (=community)
- Because their roots are highly intertwined, they stand and grow to greater heights TOGETHER, with greater strength together to endure fire, floods, drought, earthquakes...

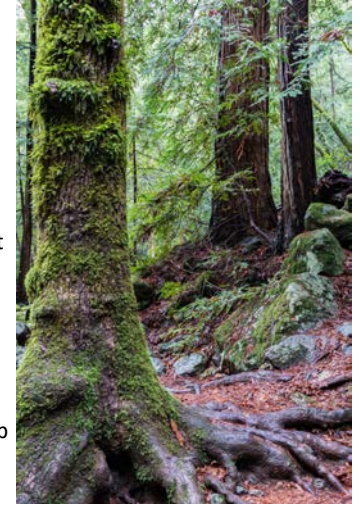


5

What is perseverance?

“Suffering produces perseverance” as we:

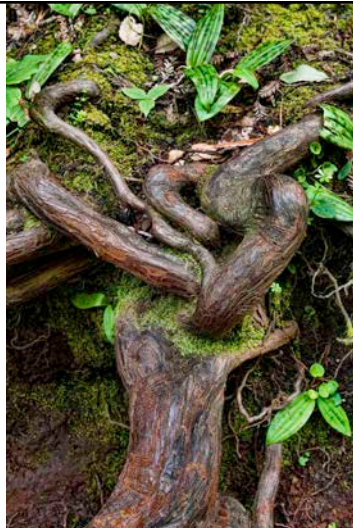
1. Grow of our spiritual roots in God, allowing us to draw greater strength and nutrients from Him. Colossians 2:6
“Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”
2. Grow our spiritual roots in one another, so that we nourish and strengthen each other. Eph 3:17-18 “I pray that you being rooted and established in love may have power together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.”



6

How do we grow deeper roots in Him/each other?

Ephesians 6:13-18 “Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm, then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.”



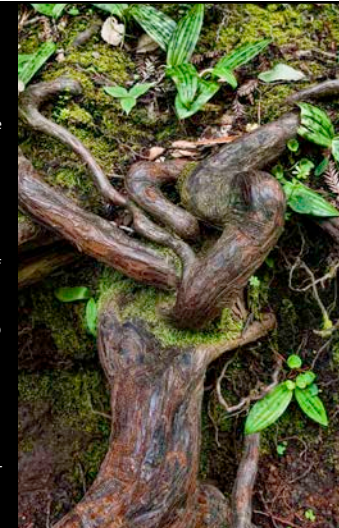
7

How to stand in our struggle with evil (suffering)? Armor of God = Roots

Stand by “PUTTING ON” the armor of God in unity with others (= a grove of redwood trees growing deeper roots into Him and one another):

1. Belt of truth: Gird ourselves with God’s truth about:
 - God – He is all powerful, all loving
 - Ourselves – we are created, loved, redeemed by Him
 - Our world – This world is His; He is redeeming it from evil
2. Breastplate of righteousness: Know our righteousness, and that of our brothers and sisters, is in Jesus.
3. Feet wearing the gospel of peace: Know that our purpose as sojourners in this fallen world is to live out and bring the gospel to others, bringing glory to God.
4. Shield of faith: Use our faith, interlock it with others’, to guard us against all evil.
5. Helmet of salvation: Know that our unique identity and dignity as persons is protected in Him and will be saved for eternity.
6. Sword of the Spirit: Wield our only offensive weapon against evil – His living word.

IN ALL OF THESE (1-6) : Prayer in the Spirit for ourselves and others.



8

Suffering

More difficult path: Seeing and entrusting suffering to God

Practices: Lament, worship (others to be discussed)

Easier path: Denying suffering, not entrust God with suffering (relying on self, running from God)

Practices: Avoidance, withdrawal...

Fall → evil in us & evil around us →

Christ Follower → Moment to moment choice

9

Perseverance

More difficult path: To grow deeper roots in our relationship with God and in relationships with one another

Practices: Root growth, rock, soil, etc.

GRACE ABOUND!
Proverbs 24:16 "Though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again"

Easier path: To withdraw from God and from one another

Practices: TO GIVE IN, TO FAIL TO STAND

Fall → evil in us & evil around us →

Christ Follower → Moment to moment choice

10

Spiritual Practices for the Week: Growing Deeper Roots in Him and with One Another

1. Monday – Belt of truth: Gird ourselves with God’s truth about God, ourselves, and our world.
 - *Naming the lies we are believing, replacing them with Truth, for ourselves and for others.*
2. Tuesday – Breastplate of righteousness: Know our, and our brothers’ and sisters’, righteousness is in Jesus.
 - *Recognizing the condemnation and unforgiveness we are experiencing in ourselves and toward others, allowing Jesus’ righteousness to cover them all.*
3. Wedn – Feet fitted with gospel of peace: Know that our purpose as sojourners in this fallen world is to live out and bring the gospel to others, bringing glory to God.
 - *Asking God to show us the gospel story we are to live into in our circumstances, even our suffering. Sharing our lives, and the gospel story, with others.*

11

Spiritual Practices for the Week: Growing Deeper Roots in Him and with One Another

4. Thursday – Shield of faith: Use our faith, interlock it with others’, to guard us against all evil.
 - *Naming places of unbelief, proclaiming faith in its stead. Encouraging the faith of others.*
5. Friday – Helmet of salvation: Know that our unique identity and dignity is protected in Him and is saved for eternity.
 - *Acknowledging where our identity has not been rooted in Him. Proclaiming into these places that He is the source of our value, our uniqueness, our calling. Upholding others in their identity and dignity in Christ.*
6. Saturday – Sword of the Spirit: Wield our only offensive weapon against evil – His living word.
 - *Praying into and memorizing scriptures that speak the truth into our circumstances. Sharing scripture with others.*

IN ALL (1-6) : Pray in the Spirit for ourselves and others.

12

From Suffering to Hope

Theory & Practice

Retribution & Innocence

Spring 2020



1

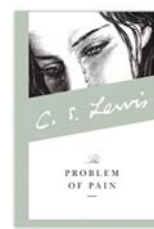
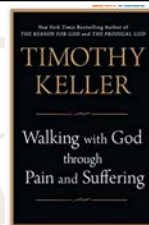
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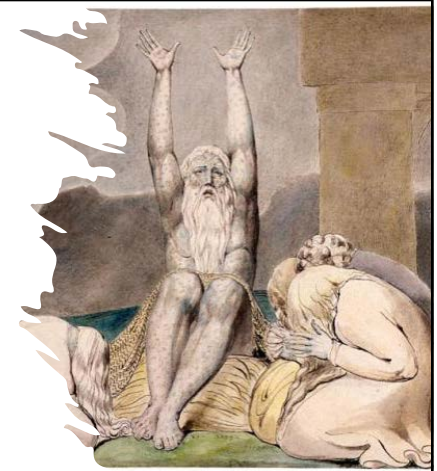
Resources?



3

Many Limitations

- Modes of theological inquiry
 - Biblical Revelation (primary)
 - Reason
 - Individual Experience
 - Collective Experience (tradition)
- Suffering is a mystery, requires humility
 - Glimpses of reality
 - Much held in silence
- Theory + Spiritual Practice
- Empty Cross is final answer



4

Christian Conceptual Model of Suffering

Suffering is an intense disintegration of personhood, experienced in loss of a perceived good, resulting from evil.

5

Retribution Principle

- = To give back, repay, return for prior actions: blessings and curses
- Obedience = divine blessing,
- Disobedience = divine curse,
- Biblical covenants:
 - Conditional
 - Unconditional
 - = curse falls on God

6

Covenant with Humanity (Adamic)

Hitite Treaties	Deuteronomy	Exodus 20-24;
1. Title	1. Title (1:1-5)	1. Title (20:1)
2. Historical Prologue	2. Historical Prologue (1:6-4:43)	2. Historical Prologue (20:2)
3. Requirements A. Basic B. Detailed	3. Requirements A. Basic (4:44-11:32) B. Detailed (12-26)	3. Requirements A. Basic (20:3-26) B. Detailed (21-23)
4. Text A. Storage B. Reading	4. Text A. Storage (27:1-8) B. Reading (27:8-26)	4. Text A. Storage (24:4) B. Reading (24:7)
5. Witnesses	5. Witnesses (30:19)	5. Witnesses (24:9-11)
6. Consequences A. Curses B. Blessings	6. Consequences A. Blessings (28:1-14) B. Curses (28:15-68)	

Genesis 2	Covenant of Works
Title	Gen 2:4
Historical Prologue	Gen 2:4-15
Requirements	Gen 2:16-17
Text	-
Witnesses	Gen 2:22; 3:1 (?)
Consequences	Gen 2:17

Hosea 6:7, referring to the sins of Israel: "But like Adam they transgressed the covenant"

7

Covenant with Humanity

Genesis 3: retribution for covenant breaking

14 The LORD God said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

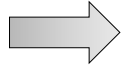
15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring¹⁴ and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

16 To the woman he said,

"I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to¹⁵ your husband, but he shall rule over you."

8

Covenant with Humanity



Genesis 3: retribution for covenant breaking

17 And to Adam he said,

"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,'

cursed is the ground because of you;

in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.

19 **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."

9

Covenant with Israel (Mosaic)

- Deuteronomy 28-30: blessings & curse
- Deuteronomic history:
 - Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings
 - Israel's history told with Deuteronomy as interpretative framework
 - Israel fails to keep covenant
 - God's retribution leading to exile

Deuteronomy 27:26 English Standard Version (ESV)

26 "'Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

10

Retribution in the Old Testament?

Psalms 38:3-4 English Standard Version (ESV)

- 3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is **no health** in my bones because of my sin.
- 4 For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me.

Illness

Proverbs 6:12-15 English Standard Version (ESV)

- 12 A worthless person, a **wicked man**, goes about with crooked speech,
- 13 winks with his eyes, signals^{with} with his feet, points with his finger,
- 14 with perverted heart devises evil, continually sowing discord;
- 15 therefore **calamity will come upon him suddenly; in a moment he will be broken beyond healing.**

Calamity

11

Retribution in the New Testament?

Galatians 6:7-9 English Standard Version (ESV)

Reap & Sow

7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, **for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.** 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 9 And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

John 5:8 English Standard Version (ESV)

8 Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk."

Sin

14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! **Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.**"

12

Retribution in Hinduism

"The acts done in former births never leave any creature. In determining the working out of karma the Lord of Creation saw them all. Man, since he is under the control of karma, must always have in mind how he can restore the balance and rescue himself from evil consequences."

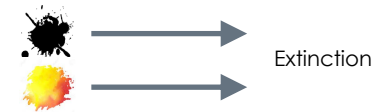
Mahabharata Vanaparva 215.11

- Karma – Lit. 'Work'
- Moral Law Of Cause And Effect
- As Every Physical Event Has A Cause & Effect, So Every Spiritual Event
- Each individual wholly responsible for his or her present condition and will have exactly the future he or she is now creating (H. Smith *The World's Religions*, p.64)
- Axiomatic, unbreakable rule

13

Strengths of Retribution Principle / Karma

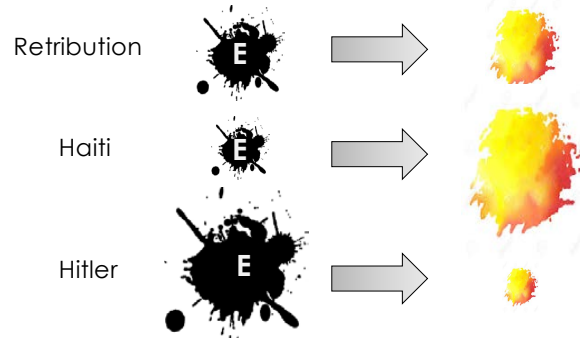
1. Moral cause-&-effect widely experienced
2. Affirms moral universe & full justice
3. Secular view
 - No Restitution for victims (Holocaust)
 - Little retribution of evil (Hitler)
 - 'Evil' itself is a social construction
4. Human 'justice':
 - Little restitution possible
 - Individual deterrence & rehabilitation



14

Problems With Retribution?

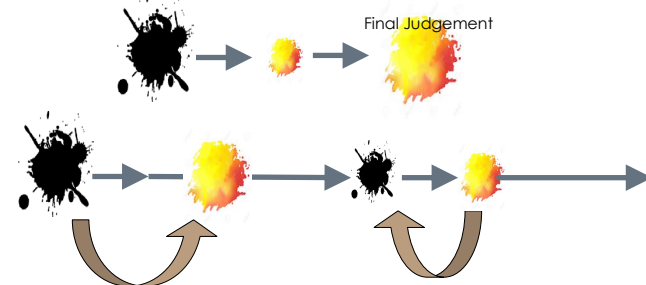
1. Evil & suffering often disproportional, unfair



15

Ways to Solve Disproportion

- Secularism: no resolution = meaningless
- Monotheism: Final Judgement
- Pantheism: samsara / cycle of rebirth



16

False Accusation

- Common experience
 - Mis-construal for accuser's gain
 - Misperception based on incomplete knowledge
- Retribution only partially true
- No moral account of 'false positives';
- The innocent suffer



17

Retribution Corrected

Affirmation of Innocent Suffering

- Joseph, Israel, Moses, Tamar, David, Job
- "innocent blood" (23x)
- "Man born blind" John 9

Sacrificial system: innocent animal

- Innocence enables transference
- Scapegoat



18

Retribution Principle Corrected

- Does Job suffer because of sin? No but yes
- Does the book overturn retribution theology? Yes but no

Job 22:4-11 English Standard Version (ESV)

Job 42:1

4 Is it for your fear of him that he reproves you and enters into judgment with you? Is not your evil abundant? There is no end to your iniquities. For you have exacted pledges of your brothers for nothing and stripped the naked of their clothing. You have given no water to the weary to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry. The man with power possessed the land, and the favored man lived in it. You have sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless were crushed. Therefore snares are all around you, and sudden terror overwhelms you, or darkness, so that you cannot see, and a flood of water covers you.

10 And the friends of Job said to him all the time that he was afflicted, "Where is your piety, where is your righteousness, where is your fear of God, where is your love for him? Where is your special regard, where is your holiness, where is your strength, where is your power?"

11 Then came before him, and ate and comforted each of them.

12 And the Lord said to Job, "You have spoken what is right, as my servant Job has said. You have not spoken falsely against me."

13 Therefore the Lord has forgiven Job's iniquities, as he had said.

14 And Job himself had made seven sons and three daughters.

15 The first was named Jemima, the second Keziah, the third Keren-Happuch. These three were beautiful, like the rubies of Sheba.

16 The fourth was named Henoch, the fifth Candace, the sixth Elishah. These six were born to him after he had afflicted Job.

17 And Job had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred oxen, and five hundred donkeys.

18 He had servants, and he had daughters who were virgins.

19 Job was the greatest of all the sons of Adam, who were born on the earth. He was blameless and upright, one who feared God and shunned evil.

20 He was blameless in what he did, he was generous and gave, he despised no one.

21 He was blameless in what he did, he was generous and gave, he despised no one.

22 He was blameless in what he did, he was generous and gave, he despised no one.

23 He was blameless in what he did, he was generous and gave, he despised no one.

24 He was blameless in what he did, he was generous and gave, he despised no one.

25 He was blameless in what he did, he was generous and gave, he despised no one.

26 He was blameless in what he did, he was generous and gave, he despised no one.

27 He was blameless in what he did, he was generous and gave, he despised no one.

28 He was blameless in what he did, he was generous and gave, he despised no one.

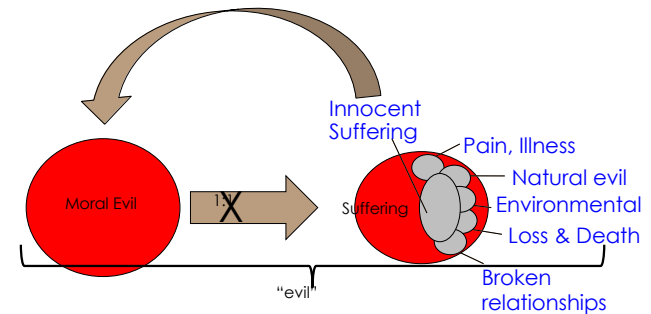
29 He was blameless in what he did, he was generous and gave, he despised no one.

30 He was blameless in what he did, he was generous and gave, he despised no one.

31 He was blameless in what he did, he was generous and gave, he despised no one.

19

Conceptual Model of Suffering



20

Divine Love Deeper than Justice

1 Peter 2:21-24 English Standard Version (ESV)

21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

21

Why Suffering?

1. Retribution is biblical (covenantal)
2. Secular = no ultimate Justice; suffering meaningless
3. Retribution alone (karma) = blames the victim
4. Innocent suffering = operates on level of Divine Love
5. Knowing God revealed in suffering

"He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering. Therefore he prefers works to suffering, glory to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, and in general, good to evil. These are the people whom the apostle calls 'enemies of the cross of Christ' (Phil 3:18), for they hate the cross and suffering and love works and the glory of works" (Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation*, Thesis 21, *TGS*, p. 157).

22



23

Retribution Spirituality

Suffering Questions	Secular	Hindu
Why am I suffering?	Random / meaningless	Karma
Nature of evil?	Social construction	Illusion
How to overcome it?	Avoid / Minimize	Merit (dharma) Reincarnation (samsara)
Is there hope?	Make world better	Moksha (unity with Brahman)

24