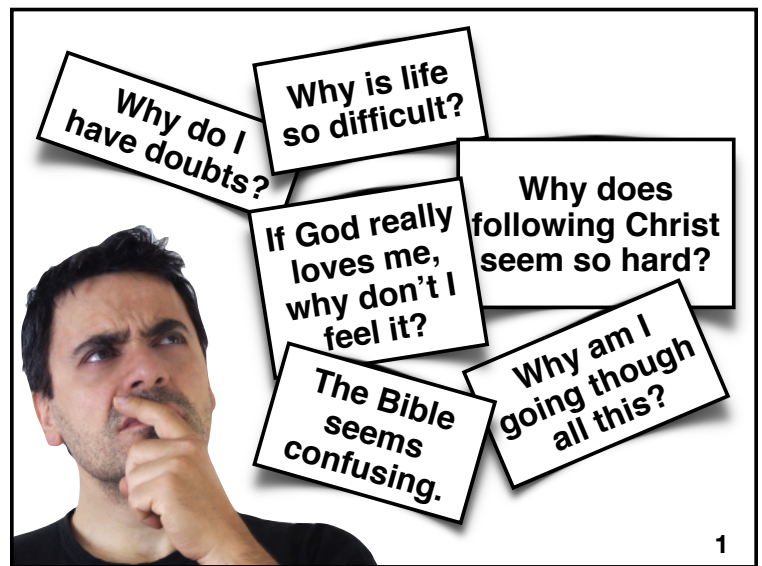


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THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

James 1:12-18
Lesson #4
Trials and Sin
03/21/2021



Why do I have doubts?

Why is life so difficult?

If God really loves me, why don't I feel it?

Why does following Christ seem so hard?

The Bible seems confusing.

Why am I going through all this?

1

Spiritual Health is
measured, not by a
pain free life but
rather in how we
respond to suffering.

2

The great challenge -
SUFFERING & DEATH

Is the material world
of source of the human dilemma?



Marx

(arrangement of
the material world)

**Humanity needs
social revolution.**



Buddha

(attachment to
the material world)

**Humanity needs
inner enlightenment.**

3

Christian Diagnosis
of the human dilemma

Romans 1:21, 25

“For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. . . . serving the creature rather than the Creator.”

**Suffering is a sign of our real problem -
alienation from God.**

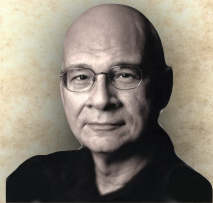
The solution is not:
**reformation of or
renunciation of
the creation.**

The solution is:
**reconciliation with
the Creator.**

4

“Suffering is
actually at the
heart of the
Christian
story.”

Tim Keller



5

"I remembered this basic religious principle that God isn't there to take away our suffering or our pain but to fill it with his presence."

Anne Lamott



6

Matthew 11

"28 Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. 30 For **My yoke is easy, and My load is light.**"



Why does the Way of the Cross seem anything but easy?

7

Our perceptions shape our life.

Matthew 6

"22 **The lamp of the body is the eye**; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"

Troubling material circumstances can:

destroy our joy (James 1:2-8).

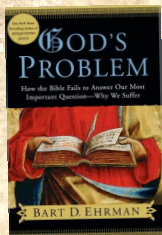
define our image of self & others (James 1:9-11).

distort our image of God (James 1:12-18).

8



9



"Why the Bible Fails to Answer our Most Important Question - Why we Suffer?"

Could it be that the Biblical answer is clear but we choose to reject it?

Bart D. Ehrman



10

"If our minds can't plumb the depths of the universe for good answers to suffering, well, then, there can't be any!"

This is blind faith of a high order."

Tim Keller



11

James 1

✓ Vs.2 "Consider it all joy" when you face hard times. It will build endurance.
UNREASONABLE?

✓ Vs.9 "Glory in" poverty and loss of wealth because our hope is in Christ.
UNREALISTIC?

✓ Vs.12 "Blessed" is the person who goes through trials for he will experience the best of life. **UNFAIR?**



12

James 1

"¹² Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed **by his own lust**. ¹⁵ Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."



**Temptations come not from God
but from our own passions.**

13

James 1

"¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. ¹⁷ Every good thing given and every **perfect gift** is from above, coming down from the **Father of lights**, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. ¹⁸ In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of **first fruits among His creatures**."

God's perfect gift is not a renewed world
**but a renewed mind
through an indwelling Spirit
that is a light to the world
as the Body of Christ.**



14

**Troubling circumstances
are a Test leading to:**

Temptation and/or **Testimony**

to distort our
perceptions

of Self,
Others,
and God

with passions
leading to sin



to clarify the
perception

of the Word
and Way
of the Cross

leading to a
living witness

15

God is Sovereign:

✓ NOT in that He micromanages all our circumstances.

✓ **BUT** in that He works all things together to fulfill His will. Rom.8:28

God is Gracious:

✓ NOT in that He controls our responses.

✓ **BUT** in that He respects His image in humanity by sending His Word & Spirit to draw us to Him through our faith.

16

**God's Glory
is revealed in two ways**

Creation

The Image of God in humans is the pinnacle of Creation

ENABLING God and humanity to commune with each other.

Redemption

the Word of God & Spirit of Christ are the gifts of grace

that **ENLIGHTEN, EQUIP, and ENCOURAGE** us.

17

God's gifts are His Image, Son, & Spirit.

Acts 17:28

"for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, **For we also are His offspring.**"

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that **He gave His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Luke 11:13

"If you then, being evil, know how to give **good gifts** to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

18

How are we to understand God's intervention in this world?

✓ NOT as a normal course of His presence.

✓ BUT as miracles - digressions from the natural course of a broken world.

God's Gift to us:

✓ NOT His control of our circumstances.

✓ BUT an anointing that equips us to respond to them **AS JESUS WOULD.**

19

1. Bearing fruit involves God's cultivation and our cooperation.

John 15



The fruitless are burned up

Judas

"1 I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 **Abide in Me, and I in you.** As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches; **he who abides in Me, and I in him**, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing."

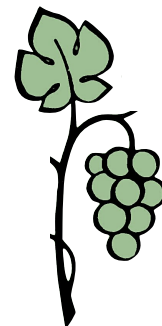
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1. Bearing fruit involves God's cultivation and our cooperation.



The fruitless are burned up

Judas



Those who abide are pruned

The other disciples

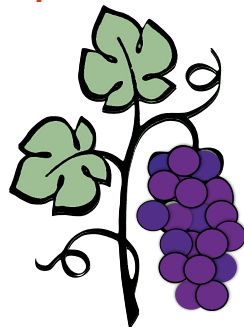
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1. Bearing fruit involves God's cultivation and our cooperation.



The fruitless are burned up

Judas



Those who abide are pruned so they will bear more fruit

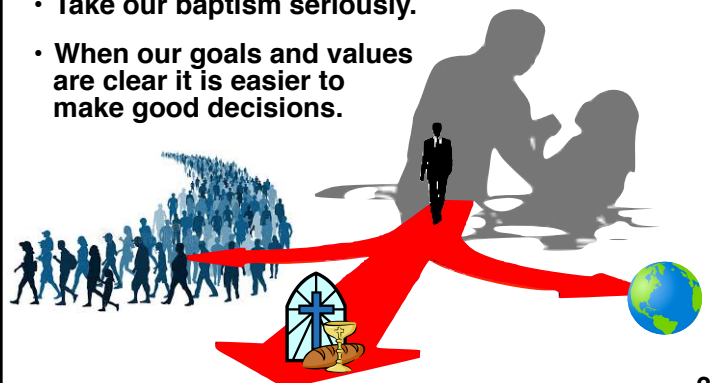
The other disciples

22

2. Staying on the path of God's will starts with facing in the right direction.

• Take our baptism seriously.

• When our goals and values are clear it is easier to make good decisions.



23

3. As Aliens, we are pruned by cultural headwinds in this life.

1 Peter 2:11

"I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul."



24

4. View tribulation as an opportunity.

The only difference between
Stumbling Blocks &
Stepping Stones

is how we see
and use them.

25

5. Nurture the spiritual side of our soul.

Romans 6:13

"and do not go on **presenting the members of your body to sin** as instruments of unrighteousness; but **present yourselves to God** as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."



26

2 Corinthians 8:9

"For you know the Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake **He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.**"

**His poverty was both
the Word of the Cross
(his dying for our sins)
and the Way of the Cross
(our dying to self as disciples).**

27

Consider Paul

- ✓ He gave up everything to follow Christ and got hard times in return.
- ✓ He was asked to evangelize without the gift of speech and with a thorn in the flesh.
- ✓ He was to go to the world but spent the last 3 years of his life in prison.
- ✓ He was building churches but spent a lot of his time dealing with believers who worked against him.



Had he missed something?

28

Romans 8

"35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall **tribulation**, or **distress**, or **persecution**, or **famine**, or **nakedness**, or **peril**, or b? 36 Just as it is written, *"For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered."* 37 But in all these things **we overwhelmingly conquer** through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, **nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God**, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

What did Paul see that others don't?

29

Philippians 3

"7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have **counted as loss** for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, **I count all things to be loss** in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom **I have suffered the loss of all things**, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10 that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and **the fellowship of His sufferings**, being **conformed to His death**; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."

30

The Bottom Line

- ✓ Don't put **troubling circumstances** in a box.
- ✓ Don't put **yourself or others** in a box.
- ✓ Don't put **God** in a box.

31



32

Deuteronomy 29:29

"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, **but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.**"

33

God does not anoint our circumstances or our response to them.

God anoints people with His Spirit to respond to their circumstances as salt and light.

34

God's Grace should inspire awe and worship not passivity, fatalism, pride, confusion, or fear.

Romans 11:33

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!"



35