

Welcome Visitors,

First, THANK YOU! We are excited to know that you are interested in worshipping God. We want you to feel very welcomed here among our group. Our goal is doing God's will. You will find that our teaching and preaching are strictly from the Bible so we encourage you to open a Bible and follow along as the lessons are presented today.

God's word is the complete guide for our life of service and worship. The all-sufficient word of God—the Bible is what we need (John 8:31-32; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). We desire to help one another in doing God's will. If you are interested in learning more please ask one of our members today.

Main Street Church of Christ Newbern, Tennessee

Schedule Of Services:

Lord's Day:	9:45 a.m.	Bible Study (All ages)
	10:20 a.m.	Morning Worship
	6:00 p.m.	Evening Worship
Wednesday:	7:00 p.m.	Bible Study

Our Elders:

**Johnie Dodds
Harry Elliott
Austin Willis**

Our Deacons:

**Danny Carpenter
Wayne Hulme
Tommy Savyers**

Our Preacher: **T. Sean Sullivan**

The Gospel Plan

HEAR THE GOSPEL MESSAGE Romans 10:11-16

BELIEVE IT !!! Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:6

REPENT—CHANGE Luke 13:3; 2 Peter 3:9

**OPENLY CONFESS—JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD
Romans 10:8-10; Acts 8:37**

**BE BAPTIZED—FOR REMISSION OF YOUR SINS
Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38-39; 1 Peter 3:21**

LIVE ON FAITHFULLY Hebrews 10:35-39 I Peter 1:6-9

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The Main Street Church of Christ

Messenger

1 Thessalonians 1:6-8

Faith: In a Tragic World

Introduction:

One of the greatest challenges of faith is also one of the hardest questions of life. How can a loving God allow the sufferings in this world? There are some things that we may not understand—things that have not been revealed to us (Deuteronomy 29:29). Knowing this, we must be careful to only see what God has said and not make assumptions beyond that which is written (1 Corinthians 4:6). We also must be careful not to provide empty philosophies or rash answers—to questions that demand such careful remedy.

Is there hope of understanding these tragedies and seeing how faith can continue? Certainly there is, with patience and the knowledge of God's word. Let's look to the word of God and see if we can find the knowledge of truth—that will allow our faith, despite the knowledge of life's tragedies.

Does Suffering Contradict our Faith?

Some have argued that human suffering proves that God cannot exist. We need to understand the source of suffering does not come from God. All that God provided for our existence was "good" (Genesis 1). This is easily understood from the creation account: Verse 4: the Light was "good". Verse 10: the land and sea were "good". Verse 12: the fruit of the tree and grass and herb of the field were "good". Verse 18: the sun and moon were "good". Verse 21: the birds of the air and creatures of the sea were "good"; Verse 25: all creatures on the land were "good". Verse 31: "everything" was "very good".

What caused all of this to change? All was well with the

Vol. Six Issue Five (D) May 23, 2010

world, until man exercised their free will. In Genesis 3:1-7, Eve, and then Adam, used this freedom to choose sin. This choice opened the door to suffering. Pain in childbirth; toil of life; and mortality: physical ailment and death were the consequences of our choice (Genesis 3:16-17). The greatest problem is that man has continued to open this door (Romans 5:12).

Philosophically: The fact that we know a standard of “goodness” at all, is important to our faith. Any person who condemns the idea of God’s existence based on the evil of human suffering must admit a presupposed idea that there is a difference between good and evil. There could be no such judgment made by anyone who does not recognize some standard of good and an ultimate good. We recognize ultimate good as God.

Is there Any Value in Suffering?

What good is harvested from the fields of human suffering? We should not expect to understand everything about our present sufferings. But over time perhaps we can see more clearly their reason. We could look to Joseph who was the victim of cruel hate. He was sold by his brothers to be a slave (Genesis 37:18-28). He was bought as a slave by Potiphar in Egypt (Genesis 39:1). He was falsely accused and imprisoned (Genesis 39:19-20). Then on top of all of that he was betrayed by one whom he had helped and left in prison—forgotten (Genesis 40:23). That is one way of looking at his life. This is a tragic story if we only focus on the suffering and do not see the good that resulted. Being sold; transported him to Egypt (Genesis 39:1). Being a slave; brought him prominence in Potiphar’s house (Genesis 39:2). Being falsely accused; brought him to know men from the courts of Pharaoh (Genesis 40:1-4). Then it was this relationship with Pharaoh’s butler that brought Joseph to Pharaoh’s presence (Genesis 41:9-14). Joseph was embraced by Pharaoh and became second in charge of the whole dominion (Genesis 41:37-45). This provided for the preservation of the sons of Jacob, his brothers, during the great famine (Genesis 42-47:12) and this established the Israelite nation and they multiplied greatly (Exodus 1:1-7). From a much later perspective we can see that ultimately, the temporary sufferings of Joseph provided for the salvation of mankind through the preservation of the lineage of Jesus (Matthew 1:1-16).

The greatest benefit ever afforded us came through suffering. Isaiah 53:1-12; Matthew 27:27-50 speak of the occasion of the ultimate suffering and death of Jesus, from which came our ultimate relief—our relief from sin (Hebrews 10:22-28) and our spiritual separation from God (Romans 6:23).

Embracing Real Faith in Suffering

Suffering should not be seen as destructive but rather ultimately beneficial. When we face suffering we become aware that there is a place better than this world (Hebrews 11:16). We come to face the fact that we are mortal and this life is temporary (Ecclesiastes 12:1-14; James 4:14). We are confronted with a mind set on the need for repentance (Jonah 2:1-4). We focus of the true need of salvation (Luke 23:39-43; Acts 16:25-33). We discover the strength of our faith (1 Peter 1:6-9; Revelation 2:10) while witnessing the creation of character and hope (Romans 5:1-5).

The Lord declared that His strength is made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul replied, “*When I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Corinthians 12:10). We need to grasp this understanding of truth.

We need to embrace real truth. Truth: Mortal life is not the end all be all of our existence (Hebrews 9:27). Truth: God does care (1 Peter 5:7) but is also completely just in allowing us to have freedom of choice and its consequences (Romans 6:16-18). Truth: There is no ultimate tragedy that can befall a Christian. If we die, however we die, we are prepared to enter into a better place (Luke 16:22). Paul said, for him to remain was needful for the brethren, which is good; but to depart and be with the Lord is much better (Philippians 1:23-24)

Conclusion:

Part of the experience of this world is suffering. People will continue to believe that they could improve on this world’s design. The truth is that suffering and pain and death have their place. If we never suffered in any way, we would all be spoiled self-centered brats.

The point of this world is not the comfort of mortal life but rather a training ground for the preparation of the soul (Acts 17:26-27). It is the trials of life that strengthen us. Paul put it right when he said, “*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*” (Romans 8:18). Challenge yourself to embrace the faith that says, “Heaven is better—it is better to be in Heaven than here” Today, are you prepared in such a way as to embrace the hope of Heaven? Do not face the world on your own; life is too hard without God. Seek your salvation right now. ~tss