

The Mystery of Evil and Sufferings
(邪惡與苦難的奧祕) by T.C. Lo
Scripture: Luke 13:1-9

- **Introduction**
 - Luke 13:1-5
 - Key verse: “Unless you repent, you too will all perish.” (Lk.13:3, 5)
 - Human heart cries for a reason in suffering
 - “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way?” (Lk.13:2)
 - “Do you think they were guiltier than all the others living in Jerusalem?” (Lk.13:4)

- **Christianity faces more difficulties than do other worldviews**
 - Speculations from non-Christian worldviews
 - Buddhism---the answer to evil is “Karma” based on the worldview of reincarnation or rebirth.
 - Muslim---“Our primary problem is we don’t follow Allah’s law.” Solution: we ought to strive to follow God’s law.
 - Stoicism/fatalism---Don’t ask. This is the way it is. Accept it by keeping a stiff upper lip. Let nothing get you down.
 - Evolutionism---Strong against the weak is Natural Selection’s basic law. Suffering should be perfectly natural.
 - But what do these worldviews offer? No consolation; no hope.
 - Christianity is challenged by difficulties
 - Since evil and suffering exist, a loving God cannot.
 - Problem arises from the attributes of God: all-knowing, all-good, and omnipresent.

- **The philosophical argumentations**
 - Atheists’ hidden premise exposed:
 - Suffering is pointless
 - Suffering is injustice
 - Christians debunk the atheists’ hidden premise
 - Not all sufferings are pointless
 - When “injustice” is mentioned, it posits the existence of “justice” which points to the existence of God.
 - Ravi Zacharias’ five-point approach:
 1. Yes, there is evil in this world.
 2. If there is evil, there must be good from which evil is measured.
 3. If there is good and evil, there must be a *moral law* on which to differentiate between good and evil.
 4. If there is a *moral law*, there must be a moral law giver.
 5. For the theists, moral law giver points to God.

- **Could sufferings produce any good?**
 - Illustration of Romans 8:28 through Joseph’s life
 - Joseph’s character was refined and his faith in God was strengthened through years of his sufferings.

- God used Joseph's suffering to saved lives and unite the disjunctive family.
 - Medical illustration: The pain of painlessness
 - The parents of a girl who had CIPA (insensitivity to pain) had only one prayer, "God! Let my child feel pain." We begin to see pain is a gift, and realize some benefits in sufferings.
 - Christ's ultimate suffering on the cross was transformed into the ultimate good of Salvation for mankind.
 - Who can say that God can't transform our lesser sufferings into a spiritual good for our edification through His marvelous wisdom?
- **Sufficient grace is provided for the sufferers to sustain suffering**
 - Jesus' crucifixion offers consolation to the sufferers
 - "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (Matt.26:38) --- emotional exclamation.
 - "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." (Matt.26:42) --- Submissive appeal.
 - Jesus' physical suffering was unbearable; the pain of separation from His Father made Him overwhelmed with sorrow beyond description --- the excruciating suffering.
Embracing the Christian doctrine of incarnation and the cross brings profound consolation in the midst of suffering.
 - Jesus' resurrection brings eternal hope to the sufferers
 - The ultimate evil is death. And death has been defeated by Jesus' resurrection.
 - In the New Heaven and the New Earth, Jesus will personally wipe every tear from our eyes. There will be no more death, mourning, crying, pain and injustice anymore.
Embracing the Christian doctrine of resurrection brings a powerful hope in the midst of suffering. We may not have immediate explanation but we have eternal explanation to evil and sufferings.
- **Jesus' response to the Galileans (Luke 13: 3, 5)**
 - A warning to the suffering world:
 - Earthly and temporarily sufferings may happen to good or bad people.
 - But eternal judgment is sure to fall on unrepentant people.
 - The only way to receive the sustaining grace (i.e., consolation and eternal hope) is to repent from your sins.
 - God is willing to bestow grace upon us out of His mercy and through His patience. (Luke 13:6-9)
- **Conclusion**

"Our present world is not the best of all possible worlds, but it is the best way to the best possible world," said Norman Geisler. Christians may not completely know evil---it remains a mystery, but Christians know good (God) through the revelation of the Bible; they have consolation now and hope in the future. The atheists, however, know neither evil nor good, so they have nothing to fall back to in the midst of suffering. The connection between Jesus' reply (Luke 13: 3, 5) and evil and sufferings now becomes apparent.