

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

AUGUST 7 - 11, 2023

Sermon Series 5.28 - 8.13

# FORGED

## IN THE FURNACE

# MONDAY

Read **1 Peter 5:8-13; 2 Corinthians 1:3-11; Job 36:15**

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Suffering prevails across cultures and circumstances. It's a leading basis for skeptics' rejection of God. Yet even mature, faithful Christians struggle with it, particularly when "good people" suffer.

Some fall into the entitled "I deserve better!" trap, underrating the offensiveness of their sins to a holy, loving, sacrificing Creator. Others go the opposite way. "I tend to blame myself whenever I experience life's adversities ... [equating my] suffering with sin, foolishness, and poor decision-making. ... My automatic response is 'What did I do wrong?'" (Pedro Chueng) We are indeed fallen—self-inflicted wounds cause personal suffering. David's affair prompted him to have Bathsheba's virtuous husband, Uriah, killed in an attempted cover-up. After the resultant child's birth, God took him (2 Samuel 12:15-18). God disciplines His own for our good (Proverbs 3:11-12).

Fallen creation and Satan trigger suffering. Others' vices impact us, as ours affect others—there are no "victimless crimes." The enemy wants to destroy us however possible (1 Peter 5:8). I've heard it said, fittingly, "If you never tangle with the devil, maybe it's because you're walking in the same direction he is."

God permits trials to turn unbelievers to Christ or deepen believers' faith (Job 36:15). C.S. Lewis said, "God whispers to us in our pleasures,

speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” Our afflictions might fuel a personal ministry that is comforting others who are facing similar trials (2 Corinthians 1:4). Challenging ordeals can build character (James 1:2-4), sometimes enabling higher virtues: love, charity, sacrifice, heroism, even art. “[Jesus]... saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned ... that he was born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed.’ (John 9:1-3)

“When we face hardship, we should [self-]examine [regarding sinfulness] ... [However, suffering] is not always God’s discipline. So when others suffer, we should not quickly conclude that God is punishing them for sin.” (Cheung) Do you quietly cheer when another “gets what’s coming”? Do you ever self-scourge over past, already-forgiven sins? Neither way is God’s best.

## QUESTIONS

What are some of suffering’s causes? Why does God permit suffering? How do you tend to respond when witnessing or experiencing suffering?

## PRAYERS

For 2023-24 School Year

School will soon be opening for the 2023 - 24 school year as early as this month. We have students from preschool age all the way to graduate school who need to prepare themselves physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually for the new school year. Pray for confidence, motivation, and support that they will need for a successful year. Pray that they will be safe and protected in the Lord’s hands.

# TUESDAY

Read **Genesis 3:1-15; Matthew 4:1-11; 1 Peter 5:8**

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*“Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour”* (1 Peter 5:8). It’s interesting that Peter calls Satan *“your adversary”*—not *“God’s adversary.”* Many mistakenly view Satan as God’s peer-like rival, forgetting that the devil—like everything other than God—is created. They elevate Satan, likely delighting him.

Such error shows up in obsessing over the devil, blaming him for every evil, seeing demons everywhere, fearing crushing assaults by this enemy, etc. Such people take eyes off of Jesus, perilously distracted by obsession with the diabolical. Some who overestimate the devil give into the notion that goodness and love are futile, submitting to Satan and worshiping him as their source of dark power.

The alternatively gross misperception of the enemy is that he is fictional or, even if not, merely a mischievous, amusing character prominent at Halloween—red tights with protruding arrowhead-tipped tail, horns and pitchfork, pointy black beard and mustache, etc. Upon misbehaving, some people even playfully joke, *“The devil made me do it!”* Some universities—Duke and Arizona State—and New Jersey’s professional hockey team even feature devil-themed mascots, portraying Satan as entertaining.

It is perilous either to overestimate or underestimate Satan. Jesus didn't rebuke Satan's claim that this world was his to give (Matthew 4:9); however, the Lord used Scripture and advice later penned by James to overcome His wilderness temptations: "*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*" (James 4:7). Jesus called the devil "*the ruler of the world*" (John 12:31); Paul characterized him as "*the god of this world*" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Although formidable—overmatching any mere human apart from God—Job chapters 1 and 2 remind us that Satan can do only what God permits. In a sense the devil unwittingly works for God, his faith-testing temptations strengthening believers who remain faithful and sometimes he drives others to a saving refuge in Christ. Revelation 12:10 hints that Satan lost his job as Christians' accuser upon the Savior's atoning death and victorious resurrection. The enemy is not God's equal, but he is also not a cartoon. He is a powerful, shrewd and vicious spiritual being, while also Jesus' defeated foe.

## QUESTIONS

What are some common misperceptions regarding our enemy, the devil? Why did Jesus call the devil "*the ruler of the world*" (John 12:31)? In what ways is the devil unknowingly working for God?

## PRAYERS

For 2023-24 School Year

Pray for all the school teachers and other school staff, including those who provide safety, counseling, and academic support. May all feel valued and supported by their administrators, parents, and students as they touch the lives of each child. Pray also for parents who provide homeschooling.

# WEDNESDAY

Read **1 Peter 5:8-9; Hebrews 4:14-16; 1 Corinthians 15:42-49**

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*“Be sober-minded; be watchful ... Resist [the devil], firm in your faith.”* (1 Peter 5:8-9) Yesterday’s readings featured Jesus’ wilderness temptation by Satan—this and His prior baptism by John commenced the Lord’s public ministry. We debunked the notion that Satan is God’s near-equal; yet Jesus—the Messiah and God Himself in human flesh—squared off with the devil right out of the gates. Why? Was this mere theatrics, a sort of dance “spicing up” the biblical narrative?

Remember that amidst His first Advent, Jesus was *“in every respect ... tempted as we are”* (Hebrews 4:15). In coming to earth to save us, the celestial Savior *“emptied himself (of divine power and privilege), by taking the form of a servant”* (Philippians 2:7)—everything He said and achieved were within human limitations. The Lamb of God relied fully upon the Father’s and Spirit’s power and guidance, thus facing real and extreme temptations in human frailty.

When promising, *“In the world you will have tribulation”* (John 16:33), Jesus spoke from personal experience. His life of material poverty, wilderness temptation, persecution by Jewish authorities, anguish in Gethsemane, betrayal and abandonment by friends, and brutal crucifixion are among the trials the Christ faced. As a Man, albeit the perfect Man, Jesus qualified to be our *“Great High Priest”* (Hebrews 4:14) and *“Advocate”* (1 John 2:1). A man prompted the

fall which cursed humankind and creation. It took a Man, Jesus “*the last Adam*” (1 Corinthians 15:45), to pay the price reversing the curse.

As always, Jesus is not only our sacrificing Redeemer and Lord, but also our Example. Although Himself sinless throughout, Jesus—like the rest of us—“*learned obedience through what He suffered*” (Hebrews 5:8). What was previously unnecessary for the eternal Word of God (i.e., obedience) became fundamental to Jesus of Nazareth amidst His first coming mission.

“*Be sober-minded*”—Jesus was “*a Man of sorrows*” (Isaiah 53:3).

“*Be watchful*”—Jesus “re-charged” Himself regularly via prayer and regularly warned followers of coming trials. “*Resist ... firm in your faith*”—Jesus did not counter-attack tormenters; he steadfastly endured their attacks. I hope to improve in passing such tests more regularly. God, help me!

## QUESTIONS

Why do you think the Holy Spirit led Jesus to a wilderness confrontation with Satan as the Lord’s ministry commenced? What does it mean that Jesus “*learned obedience through what He suffered*” (Hebrews 5:8)? Why was this important?

## PRAYERS

### For 2023-24 School Year

Pray for school district administrators and staff for the up-coming year. Pray that they will steward the funds allotted to best provide and enrich the needs of their constituents. Let us pray that they feel appreciated, respected, and cared for as they support the teachers, students, and families.

# THURSDAY

Read **1 Peter 5:10-11; Proverbs 3:11-12; Lamentations 3:31-33**

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First Peter 5:10 opens with “*And after you have suffered a little while*”—note that it does not say, “If you have suffered.” Jesus presumed suffering: “*In the world you will have tribulation*” (John 16:33). As considered Monday, such suffering remains a mystery and stumbling block for many.

Parenting helps you understand why “*the Lord disciplines the one He loves ... every child whom He receives*” (Hebrews 12:6). Most children don’t love homework or chores, going to bed at reasonable hours, limiting pre-meal sweets, dentist visits, etc. They may not see the greater purpose and its good. But good parents do.

Job is famous for suffering faithfully, though bewilderedly. Perhaps God allowed his trials to show Satan—and us—that all do not abandon faith amidst unprovoked, extreme ordeals. And remember that God—who loves giving great gifts—“*restored the fortunes of Job ... [and] gave Job twice as much as he had before*” (Job 42:10). This is not promised to believers temporally upon every loss, but is grossly understated in light of eternal rewards for faithful Christ followers.

As also addressed Monday, Christians’ misfortunes enable fellow believers to draw alongside them supportively. “The church is not meant to be a loosely bound association of functional [loners]. Paul confronts that ... when [instructing], ‘*Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ*’ (Galatians 6:2). The church is meant



to be a refuge for those suffering. When a member is hurting, the church applies the bandages; when a member is down, the church encourages; when a member is in need, the church comes alongside to help. ... Wherever there is suffering, there is a battle—a battle for [souls]." (Joseph Scheumann)

It's a grain of sand—an irritant—which prompts oysters to produce beautiful pearls. God sometimes permits challenges to enable later, greater blessings and "pearls." Such trials also provide us opportunity to "*rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep*" (Romans 12:15), thereby being more like the "*God ... who comforts us in our affliction*" (2 Corinthians 3-4) while drawing us closer to Him. What sufferer(s) will you help and comfort today for God's glory?

## QUESTIONS

What sorts of "good suffering" do responsible parents impose upon their children? How does this parallel with what God permits in the lives of Jesus' faithful followers? How can suffering build Christian community?

## PRAYERS

### For 2023-24 School Year

Pray for the parents of all students heading back to school that they can give their children the emotional and academic support and attention needed to excel educationally. Pray also for the parents' emotional and spiritual well-being. May they feel God's presence in the lives of their families as they participate in this process so that all feel God's love for them.

# FRIDAY

Read **1 Peter 5:9, 12-13; Revelation 6:9-11, 20:4**

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“[In July] 64 A.D. ... fire broke out in ... Rome and the entire city was ... in flames. ... Emperor Nero set that fire ... [to destroy old buildings and make] room [for] marble palaces and other monuments ... [to memorialize] his name ... The populace was incensed ... ready to revolt and overthrow him, so Nero ... started the rumor ... that the Christians had burned down the city. ... It is very likely that the Apostle Peter wrote this letter from the city of Rome in about 67 A.D.” (Ray Stedman)

Imagine being a Christian in Nero’s Roman Empire: Rome had supplanted Israel brutally as the Church’s leading oppressor. “Christians were dipped in tar and burned as torches to light [Nero’s] gardens ... They were tied to [Nero’s] chariot and dragged through the streets ... [or] thrown to the lions.” (Stedman) First Peter was written to encourage the persecuted Church, likely signified by its mysterious close, “*She (the Church?) who is at Babylon (Rome?) ... sends ... greetings*” (5:13). As contemporary Americans, we cannot picture their circumstances. But our Christian brothers and sisters elsewhere in the world can.

“Over 360 million Christians [worldwide] are persecuted for their faith in Jesus. ... [In] 2021 over 340 million Christians [were] living in places where they experience high levels of persecution and discrimination; 4,761 Christians [were] killed for their faith; 4,488 churches and other Christian buildings [were] attacked; 4,277 believers [were] detained without trial, arrested, sentenced or imprisoned.” (PAOC)

“Christians are killed all across Africa, their churches attacked and villages razed to the ground. In Pakistan, they are unjustly detained on ... [fabricated] charges ... Christian girls are kidnapped, raped, forced to convert and marry middle-aged men in countries such as Egypt, Mozambique and Pakistan. In China and North Korea, totalitarian governments crush the faithful underfoot, monitoring their every move.” (ACN)

How can we stand firm in support of the oppressed 2023 global Church? Pray for fellow believers enduring horrific conditions. Support organizations assisting the global persecuted Church—Open Doors, the Barnabas Fund and others. Pray for these, perhaps also offering your time, treasure and talents supportively.

## QUESTIONS

Why did ancient Rome begin extreme persecution of Christians? Of the information regarding the current, persecuted global church, which resonated most with you? What will you do in response?

## PRAYERS

For 2023-24 School Year

Glenkirk’s KidMin and youth program staff and volunteers have done a wonderful job supporting our children and youth. As fall programming begins, pray for the Holy Spirit to touch each with fresh ideas and creativity. Pray for additional children and youth to be attracted to Glenkirk Church through the Holy Spirit’s inspiration.

## Sources

- Pedro Cheung's quotes can be found at <https://www.biblesumo.com/5-lessons-suffering-book-of-job/>.
- C.S. Lewis' quote is from his book, *The Problem of Pain* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1940).
- Joseph Scheumann's quote can be found at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/five-truths-about-christian-suffering>.
- Ray Stedman's quotes are from <https://www.raystedman.org/bible-overview/adventuring/1-peter-living-stones>.
- The PAOC (Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada) quote can be found at <https://www.paoc.org/family/annual-initiatives/the-persecuted-church>.
- The ACN's (Aid to the Church in Need) quote is from their published report, "Persecuted and Forgotten? A Report on Christians Oppressed for Their Faith 2020-2022," November 16, 2022.



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