

6 – Why So Much Suffering?



1

How Can a God of Love Allow it?



2

Clara Anderson was a maid in San Francisco, and Clara was a very gentle woman — and very conscientious.

One day after having worked for the same employer for fifteen years, she disappeared.

Her employer had no idea where she had gone.

She seemed to have just dropped out of sight.

Miraculously, after days of searching, she was found.

Clara was in the process of starving herself to death in the mountains outside of San Francisco.

She said, “I want to die. Leave me alone.”

When the reporter who ultimately found her interviewed her, Clara said,

“Look, nobody cares about me. I’m just a maid — just one of thousands in society doing menial tasks. My life is of no value. I have no close relatives, no family, no friends. I’m so lonely that I don’t want to live.

There’s no one I consider close to me — nobody I can talk to, nobody I can open my heart to. So just let me die, because nobody really cares.”



3

“Nobody cares!” is the desperate cry of men and women on a hurting planet.

Why is there so much pain, so many broken hearts and homes, so many tragedies, accidents, and disasters? If God exists, why doesn’t He put an end to such suffering? Is He responsible for the difficulties we have to endure?



4

Many people are surprised to learn that the Bible describes a great battle that is going on between the powers of good and evil.

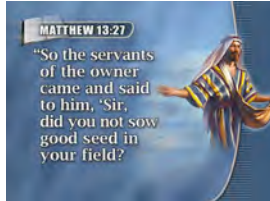
It clearly indicates that there is one who is responsible for all the pain and suffering and sorrow experienced on planet earth – and it’s not God!

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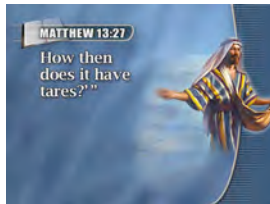
Jesus told a story about a farmer who planted good seed in his field, but when the plants came up, there were noxious weeds in the field.



6

(Text 2 Slides: Matthew 13:27)

"So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field?'"



7

How then does it have tares?"

They wanted to know, "where did the weeds come from?"



8

(Text 3 slides: Matthew 13:37-39)

"He answered and said to them: 'He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.'"



9

The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one."



10

"The enemy who sowed them is the devil."

Matthew 13:37-39

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11

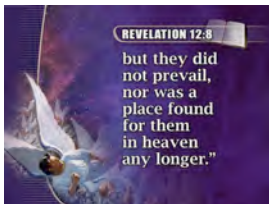
You see, while God is trying to show love and kindness to everyone, there is another power at work in this world bringing disaster, tragedy, death, and sickness into the lives of God's children. The last book of the Bible, Revelation, tells us about the origin of evil. It may surprise you, but there was once war in heaven!



12

(Text 4 slides: Revelation 12:7-9)

“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,



13

but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.



14

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil, and Satan, who deceives the whole world;



15

he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”
Revelation 12:7-9.



16

Now, notice how this dragon, or the devil is introduced in Revelation 12:3, 4:

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17

(Text 3 slides: Revelation 12:3, 4)

“And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns,



18

and seven diadems on his heads.”



19

“His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. . .”



20

Evidently one-third of the angels of heaven followed this deceiver in his rebellion against God. But let’s find out more about this fallen angel, the leader of the cosmic rebellion.

In the Old Testament He is described as the King of Tyre, and it says this about him:



21

(Text 4 slides: Ezekiel 28:12-14)

“Thus says the Lord God: You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
Ezekiel 28:12



22

You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering . . .
Ezekiel 28:13



23

You were the anointed cherub who covers . . . You were in the holy mountain of God;

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24

you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.” Ezekiel 28:14



25

Lucifer was a beautiful angel, created perfect in all his ways. He held an exalted position in heaven. On either side of the mercy seat or throne of God were two angels, one on the right and one on the left. Lucifer was one of these.

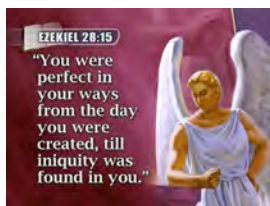


26

But he was not content being next to God. He wanted to take the place of God.

HE WANTED TO BE GOD!

Pride and jealousy began a rebellion in Lucifer’s heart. God said to Lucifer,

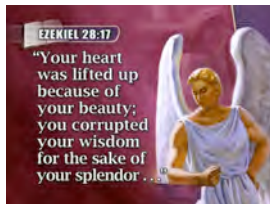


27

(Text :Ezekiel 28:15)

“You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.”

Ezekiel 28:15



(Text :Ezekiel 28:17)

“Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor...”

Ezekiel 28:17.



29

This beautiful, exalted angel became self-centered.

He coveted the glory and worship due God alone.

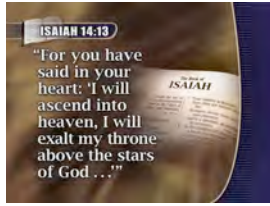
He had the boldness to challenge his Creator for the throne of the universe! Listen carefully:



(Text 3 slides:Isaiah 14:12-14)

“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground. . . .

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31

For you have said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. . . .



32

...I will be like the most High.”
Isaiah 14:12 -14



33

It wasn't long before Lucifer began to spread the spirit of discontent among the other angels. Slowly but surely, he undermined God's love and justice. Like rotten fruit in a box, his rebellion spread to other angels in heaven.



34

Perhaps you are wondering why God threw the devil out of heaven instead of destroying him. Had He done so, all His creatures would have served Him out of fear.



35

You see, God is a god of love, and love only exists where there is freedom.
[Ad lib] How many of you have children? That's quite a few of you.
How many of you would like a child that you programmed to obey everything you said?
Your child would wake up in the morning and say, "Yes, Mommy, I will eat my vegetables." "Yes, Daddy, I will clean the house."
And at certain programmed times, would say "I love you so much."
Would you like a child like that? A cold, steel, mechanical robot? You no longer have a relationship. There would be no love. Would you want this kind of a child? Of course not. And neither did God.

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36

God is a God of love. He can only be happy in a love relationship with His creatures where they worship Him because they love and trust Him.



37

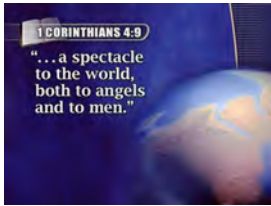
God gives everyone the power of choice to obey or not obey. Out of fairness and love, God has allowed Satan to demonstrate to the universe the way he would run the world.



38

The battle begun in heaven isn't over, it has just changed places! Earth is the ground upon which the great controversy between good and is being fought, where Satan is demonstrating his kind of government and how he would run the world.

But why Earth? Why did our planet have to become

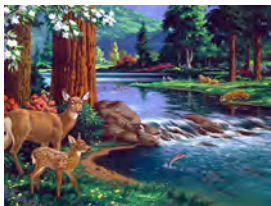


39

(Text: 1 Corinthians 4:9)

“... a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men”?

1 Corinthians 4:9.



40

The earth as it came from the hand of the Creator, in all its splendor and perfection, was beautiful beyond description. Evidently Satan thought so, too, for he saw this world as a prize worth capturing.



41

Although Adam and Eve, the father and mother of the human race, were created perfect, they were not placed beyond the possibility of wrongdoing.

They also were created free to choose to love and follow God or to ignore His instructions.

But their loyalty would be tested, and that test would focus on a single tree. God warned,

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42

(Text 2 slides: Genesis 2:16, 17)
“Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;



43

but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Genesis 2:16, 17.

That was simple enough. They must have felt quite secure. But we are most vulnerable when we are self-confident and feel secure.



44

That is what happened to Eve. Satan used his supernatural power to deceive her. As he often does, he worked slyly, deceitfully, coming to her in a form she wouldn't recognize.

Satan rarely works openly. He uses organizations, people, or even a serpent!



45

Eve was deceived.

She never suspected that the words from the talking snake came from Satan.

The devil, speaking through the serpent, asked her,



46

(Text: Genesis 3:1)

“...Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”

Genesis 3:1.



47

(Text 4 slides: Genesis 3:2-4)

Eve replied, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;



48

but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden,

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49

God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'



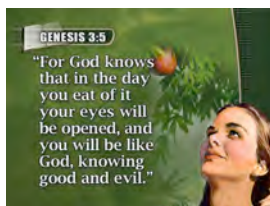
50

Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die.'"
Genesis 3:2-4



51

As Eve listened to the serpent, it must have crossed her mind that he was saying something different than what God had told them. Perhaps sensing that she felt confused, the serpent hurriedly added,



52

(Text: Genesis 3:5)
"For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
Genesis 3:5.



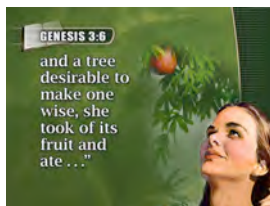
53

The devil suggested that God was unfair, that He was holding back something good.
Eve was deceived. What the devil said seemed at the moment to make sense.



54

(Text 2 slides: Genesis 3:6)
"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes,



55

and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate .
.."
Genesis 3:6.

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56

And Eve gave Adam the fruit, and he ate of it. Adam and Eve failed God's test of love and loyalty, and it was not long before they knew that something had gone wrong.



57

Satan had hijacked the newborn world! He could now claim the title, "Prince of this World" because Adam and Eve were obedient to him, not to God!



58

As this most tragic day drew to a close, God came in the cool of the evening as usual, calling for Adam and Eve. Until now, this had been the happiest time of the day! They had loved to walk and talk directly with the God who had created them. But this day they ran and hid in the bushes! Finally Adam slipped slowly out of hiding and confessed,



59

(Text: Genesis 3:10)

"...I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

Genesis 3:10.



60

Adam had never been afraid of anything before, but that is what sin does: it even makes a person afraid of God.



61

(Text: Genesis 3:11)

God replied, "...Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" Verse 11.

Adam answered:

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62

(Text: Genesis 3:12)

“...The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”

Genesis 3:12.

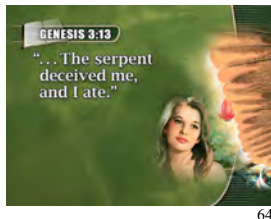
A few hours before, Adam had been willing to die with Eve.

Now he blamed her and also blamed God for creating her. How sin shatters perfect love!



63

But Eve was no less accusing. When God asked her what she had done, she replied,



64

(Text: Genesis 3:13)

“...The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Genesis 3:13.

Eve put the blame on God too! In other words, she was saying,

“It’s the serpent You made that got me into trouble.”

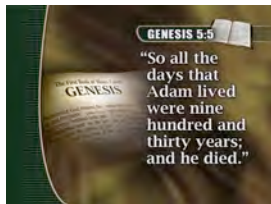


65

That very day Adam and Eve were doomed to die!

To keep Adam and Eve from eating of the tree of life, God evicted them from their garden home.

The devil said they wouldn’t die, but the Bible says,



66

(Text: Genesis 5:5)

“So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.” Genesis 5:5.

Too late, they discovered that the devil was



67

(Text: John 8:44)

“... a liar and the father of it.”

John 8:44.

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68

It is easy to blame God for the world's heartbreak and devastation, but Satan is really responsible for the havoc. He is the one who brought trouble to this planet and who has been causing sin and suffering ever since.



69

Jesus unmasked the devil and the way he afflicts people. As He was teaching in the synagogue one Sabbath, He noticed a woman bent over with a crippling deformity.

Touched by her pathetic circumstances, Jesus healed her.



70

The rulers instantly criticized Him because the healing took place on Sabbath – God's holy day of worship. But notice how He defended His actions:



71

(Text 2 slides: Luke 13:16)

“So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound ... for eighteen years,



72

be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?” Luke 13:16



73

Jesus said that Satan had bound this woman for eighteen years. Satan was the guilty one! In fact, Satan is the sinister force behind all disease and suffering, heartache, and death!



74

Perhaps nowhere in the Bible do we see Satan's strategy more clearly exposed than in the first chapter of Job, in a conversation between the devil and God.

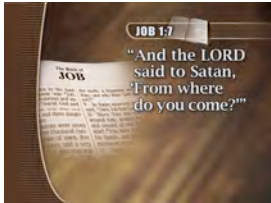
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75

Some time after the fall of Satan there was a meeting in heaven. Satan came also.

Think of that! A meeting of the “sons of God,” and Satan came uninvited!



76

(Text 2 slides: Job 1:7)

“And the Lord said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’”

Job 1:7

In other words, who invited you? What right do you have to be here? Satan answered the Lord,



77

“From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.” Job 1:7.

Satan claimed dominion over Planet Earth. He had taken over Adam’s position! (Adam had been called a “son of God,” see Luke 3:38.)



78

Satan’s claim to represent Earth did not go unchallenged. The Lord said to Satan:



79

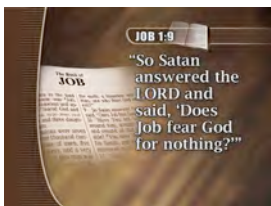
(Text 4 slides: Job 1:8, 9 , 11)

“... ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth,



80

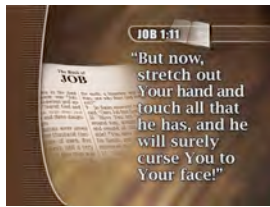
a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?’



81

So Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing?’

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82

But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!”

Job 1:8, 9, 11



83

What a challenge! Satan claimed that the only reason Job was loyal to God was because of what God did for him, not because he loved and trusted God.



84

(Text 2 slides: Job 1:12)

“And the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.’”



85

So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.”

Job 1:12.

Satan left, eager to get his hands on Job’s possessions.



86

The blows soon began to fall:

First: the Sabeans stole Job’s cattle and murdered his workers.



87

Second: Lightning struck, killing his sheep and shepherds.



88

Third: the Chaldeans came and plundered Job’s camels.

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89

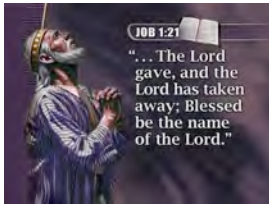
Fourth (the most heartbreaking news): a tornado demolished the home of Job's oldest son. A party was on, and all ten of Job's children were killed!



90

Poor Job! He thought that the Lord had taken away his possessions and caused all the heartache.

He didn't understand that the devil had done it! Although overcome with grief, Job's loyalty to God was unchanged.



91

JOB 1:21
"... The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord."

(Text: Job 1:21)

He said, "... The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Job 1:21

Although he could not understand the tragedies that devastated his possessions and children, Job trusted God's goodness just the same.

But Satan wasn't through.

He challenged God again, saying,



92

JOB 2:4
"... Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life."

(Text 3 slides: Job 2:4-6)

"... Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life."



93

JOB 2:5
"But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

But stretch out your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face.



94

JOB 2:6
"And the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life.'"

And the Lord said to Satan, Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life."

Job 2:4-6

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95

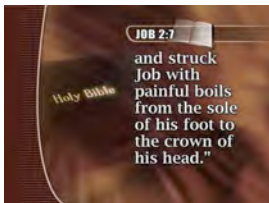
The test was on! Would Job remain loyal to God when got even worse, or would he turn his back on God?



96

(Text 2 slides: Job 2:7)

“So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD,



97

and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.”

Job 2:7



98

If you’ve ever had a boil, you know how painful just one boil can be. Imagine being covered with them from head to toe! But Job remained loyal to God!



99

“In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.”

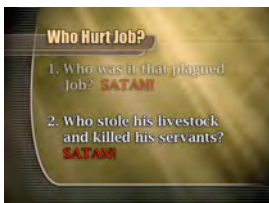
Job 1:22



100

Who was it that plagued Job?

SATAN!

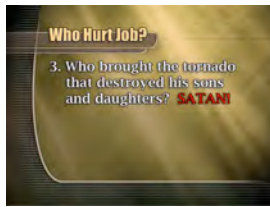


101

Who stole his livestock and killed his servants?

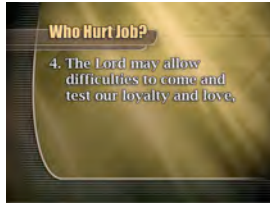
SATAN!

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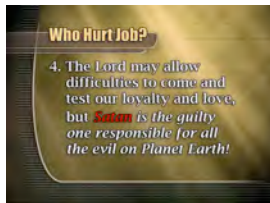
102

Who brought the tornado that destroyed his sons and daughters?
SATAN!



103

The Lord may allow difficulties to come to test our loyalty and love,



104

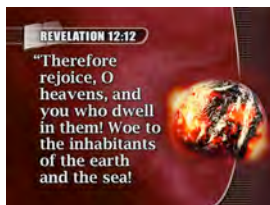
but SATAN is the guilty one responsible for all the evil on Planet Earth!



105

You and I are caught in the center of this cosmic drama, this conflict between authority and lawlessness, between the Creator and Satan, the original rebel.
We are not spectators. We are involved, whether we want to be or not.

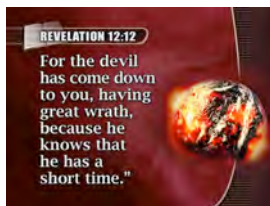
The Book of Revelation says:



106

(Text 2 slides: Revelation 12:12)

"Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea!"



107

For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."

Revelation 12:12

Peter wrote this warning:



(Text 2 slides: 1 Peter 5:8)

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion,

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108



109

seeking whom he may devour.”
1 Peter 5:8



110

The good news is that the God of creation has a plan of redemption for this lost planet.
He sent His precious Son Jesus to defeat Satan and redeem this world in rebellion.
The devil tried his hardest to overcome Jesus.



111

He worked through King Herod to destroy the Christ child (He was defeated).



112

He came to Jesus in the wilderness, masquerading as an angel from heaven with three great temptations (He was defeated).



113

He incited the crowd to destroy Jesus at Calvary (He was completely defeated).
Although Jesus died on Calvary, He rose again!



114

Satan became a defeated foe! Christ by His death and resurrection earned the right to destroy all evil and suffering.

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115

The issue today is, Whom will we believe? Whom will we follow?
A loving God – or a fallen angel?
Where is your loyalty? Whose side are you on?



116

You may be wondering about sorrow, heartache, and difficulty in your own life. You may be wondering about the loss of a child or a loved one and asking, “Where is God?”



117

To every restless, lonely heart, to every aching, guilty soul, to all His children on a planet in rebellion, Jesus gives the loving invitation:



118

(Text: Matthew 11:28)

“Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”
Matthew 11:28.



119

Joseph Scriven was an Irishman born in 1819 and a graduate of Trinity College in Dublin. Well educated and from a good family, Joseph’s life seemed to be going well. He fell in love and was engaged to be married, but the evening before the wedding his fiancé slipped and fell from a horse while crossing a bridge while he waited on the other side. She drowned in the river below before she could be rescued.

After this tragedy, Joseph left Ireland and moved to Port Hope, Canada, where he taught and tutored and eventually fell in love again. But again tragedy struck as his sweetheart fell ill of pneumonia and died before their marriage. Upon hearing of his mother’s ailing health in Ireland, and unable to go and visit her, Joseph wrote a poem for her which he titled “Pray Without Ceasing.” You may know the words:

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120

*What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!*



121

*O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.*

[Altar Call Appeal]

Maybe tonight you feel like Joseph Scriven. You may feel tonight that the great controversy is not something merely written in the Bible, it's going on in your own life. You see that pattern in your own heart. You've experienced it in your own life.

Possibly you're going through family problems, or the trauma of a divorce. Maybe right now your husband is threatening to leave, your wife is seeing someone else. You just feel so ripped apart inside, and feeling nobody understands. You're saying, God, this wasn't my idea of marriage, and you're wondering, God where are you?

Or maybe it's problems with your children, perhaps you brought them up in a Christian home and now they have little interest in Christ. You're saying, God I really need your help, where are you?

Possibly tonight you've gone through financial reverses, you've lost a job, the credit card bills are mounting, you don't know how you'll make the house payment, the car payment.

Or maybe tonight you're facing health difficulty you're facing, I don't know what you're facing, but perhaps that lump has been diagnosed as a malignancy, or you're facing heart surgery. Maybe there are symptoms going on in your body that you can't understand.

One thing you know, in spite of this trauma in your life, is that you need help, and you need it from God. You need comfort, you need His power, you need His healing touch, you need a sense that His arms are around you enfolding you in His love, you need a sense that He's whispering in your ear, My child it's going to be ok.

Tonight as we sing the wonderful song, *What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear, What a privilege to carry*

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everything to God in prayer.

[GO BACK ONE SLIDE FOR SONG]

Tonight I'm going to invite you to come forward for prayer. Tonight if you've been troubled, I'm just going to have our musician play this song. And if you need the healing touch of Jesus in your body, in your family, in your finances, if you need his power because you feel weak, we're going to stand together and sing this song and as we sing I invite you right now to come.

[Suggested prayer on next slide]



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[Suggested Prayer]

“Father, tonight we have seen that you are not the one responsible for suffering, but that you are a God of love, a God of freedom, a God of grace and goodness. Tonight we recognize that we live in a world of sin, and tonight we come to you as your children asking for your help. You know the needs of every heart. You feel the pain, you see the heartache, you know the difficulties. And tonight we present ourselves and our needs to you, asking you to comfort where it is needed, heal where it is needed, provide where it is needed. Give extra grace to those who are crying to you for help just now, because you’ve promised to supply all our needs through Christ Jesus. Make us faithful to you and your word, and may the day come soon when we will be able to see you face to face, and this old world of sin and suffering will be forever ended, we pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.”

6 – Why So Much Suffering?

[Text of Hymn: What a Friend We Have in Jesus]

*What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.*

*Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.*

*Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in
prayer!
In His arms He'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there.*

*Blessed Saviour, Thou hast promised Thou wilt all our burdens
bear
May we ever, Lord, be bringing all to Thee in earnest prayer.
Soon in glory bright unclouded there will be no need for prayer,
Rapture, praise and endless worship will be our sweet portion
there.*
