

# THE EASTSIDE EDIFIER

"So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another." (Romans 14:19)

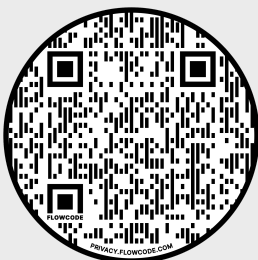
## A Warm Welcome to Our Visitors:

We are happy that you have chosen to worship with us today. You are our honored guest!

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Sunday AM: 9 Worship; 9:30  
Bible Class; 10:30 Worship/  
Lord's Supper | Wed: 7:00 PM



It is important to distinguish between suffering and punishment. In Luke 23:39–41, a thief said of himself and another, "We receive the due reward of our deeds," but of Christ he said, "this man hath done nothing amiss." All of the crucified were dying the same horrible death, but there was something qualitatively different about their traumas—while two were in agony as punishment for their crimes, one was in anguish despite his innocence. Evil visited upon the innocent is what I mean by suffering. It is hurt that "cannot be traced to ourselves" (C. S. Lewis), which can result from moral (Luke 13:2) and natural (Luke 13:4) causes. It is such hurt—such suffering—that is behind the worst of our perplexity and distress. It is such suffering that causes us to ask why (Matt. 27:46). And it is with regard to such suffering that we most struggle to find a balanced response.

Denominational author Warren Wiersbe tells about a family friend who was hit with serious trouble. Her husband had gone blind and had then come down with an incurable disease. While trying to deal with this crisis, she had a stroke that forced her to retire from her job. Although they had many friends, they had no children. One day while visiting, Wiersbe sought to encourage her by saying, "I want you to know that we're praying for you." In response she said, "I appreciate that, but what are you praying for God to do?" This caught Wiersbe off-guard, as he had never been asked this question before. Trying to come up with an intelligent response, he said that he prayed for her healing and strength, and for mercy to deal with her pain. To this she replied, "Thank you, but please pray for one more request. Pray that I won't waste all of this suffering."

When I read this it hit me right between the eyes. In seeing her problems as an opportunity, this lady had a perspective on suffering that is thoroughly biblical, but is one, I'm ashamed to say, I have too often lacked.

## News & Notes

**Sick:** *Patti Andrews* will be having an angioplasty soon. Will update as soon as the procedure is scheduled. ~ *Stacie Austin* is not feeling well this morning.

**Prayer Request:** *Kim Hays's* son (*Dakota Clark*). ~ *Angela Frank's* niece, Brittany and her little girl, Cara. ~ *Mildred McGaha's* dealing with Alzheimer's disease. ~ Keep *Thomas LeRoy* in your prayers as he is going through a difficult spiritual battle. ~ Karen Daniel's friend, *Bill Miller* is battling cancer. ~ *Brandon Miller*, Christian in Huntsville, friend of Penders, is fighting cancer. ~ *Lori Callahan's Aunt Ola*, has been diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis. ~ *The Vance's neighbor (Pat Guthrie)* has started hospice care. ~ *Angela Frank's* mother (*Karen Thomas*) is recovering from heart surgery. ~ *Kim Hays* who is working a lot on Sundays but is also having a hard time with everything. Please keep her in your prayers. ~ *Angela Franks* has requested prayers.

**Out of Town:** *The Penders* are in Hawaii with family. ~ *Paul Hilliard* is in Hawaii working.

**Our Hearts and Prayers:** Are with the Sharp family over the passing of *Sandra Pounders*, JA Sharp's sister, who was recently diagnosed with ALS. She was 68 years old. Funeral services will be at Beltline Church of Christ in Decatur on Tuesday, June 7. Visitation begins at 1PM.

### SERVING THE WEEK OF JUNE 5:

#### Sunday 9:00 AM:

**Singing:** *Song Worship Service*

**Prayer:** Jake Vance

**Lesson:** *Song Worship Service*

#### Sunday 10:30 AM

**Announcements/Scripture Reading:** Robby Callahan

**Opening Prayer:** Marc Austin

**Song Leader:** Mike Elkins

**Lord's Supper: Lead** - Aaron Andrews

**Assisting** - Felipe Benavides, Abel Hilliard

**Lesson:** Aaron Andrews

**Closing Prayer:** Jay Vance

#### Wednesday Evening

**Song Leader:** Aaron Andrews

**Invitation:** Aaron Andrews

**Closing Prayer:** Robby Callahan

2 Corinthians 12:7–10 says something important here. On three occasions Paul prayed that his thorn in the flesh (a metaphor for his suffering) be removed (ironically, not only was Paul's suffering not traceable to himself, but resulted from a blessing given him by God [12:1–4,7]). The Lord's answer to this was, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It is my opinion that Paul's thorn (12:7) and Christ's grace (12:9) here refer to the same thing. This wasn't a case where Paul was suffering, he prayed about it, and although the Lord didn't remove his suffering, He did send him some sort of blessing (grace) that made his suffering bearable. No, I believe the Lord is telling Paul that his thorn in the flesh was a manifestation of His grace! What Paul called a grievance, the Lord called a gift. What Paul saw as something the Lord needed to remove, the Lord saw as something Paul needed to receive.

Christ's answer put Paul's problems in a radically different light. And when Paul saw them in this light, and learned that his suffering was, rightly understood, grace from his Lord (which, among other things, was meant to keep him from soul-destroying pride, 12:7), he started viewing his problems as something not to be wasted—and his pleading turned into praise (12:9–10).

In the book *The Problem of Pain*, C. S. Lewis makes two points that are worth passing along. First, if God is truly wiser than we, it follows that His judgment may differ from ours on many things, so that what seems good to us may not seem good to Him and what seems bad to us may not seem bad to Him at all (37). Second, given God's wisdom, we should never doubt that when there is a discrepancy between Him and us concerning what is best for us, what He thinks and determines is always in our best interest (39).

If we can just wrap our heads and hearts around such things, maybe we'll learn what a waste it is to waste suffering. (END)

#### ADDITIONAL NOTES