

Why Suffering?

"Why suffering? If God is indeed good, why does he allow innocent people and children to suffer? " I have asked this question, and I am sure that you have as well. Loved ones suffer from debilitating disease and sickness; innocent children are born with deformities, while hunger, poverty, disease, and abuse make our hearts ache. Even at the close of life, our loved ones suffer. In our hearts we ask, "Why, oh God? Can you not fix the suffering? Is it your will that these innocent and helpless people suffer?"

We often quote the verse that says: "All things work together for good, to them that love the Lord." [Romans 8:28](#). Suffering and pain tend to draw those who love the Lord closer to Him, seeking comfort and relief. He walks with them through their pain. The Psalmist also refers to the valley of the shadow of death in the twenty-third Psalm, so we know that he also was acquainted with suffering. That still does not answer the question; "why?"

We read about the afflictions God allowed on the Children of Israel in the book of Judges. In this case, God allowed their suffering because of sin. Even though it was a punishment, He did not forget about them in their misery. The Midianites and Amalekites would come into their land destroying and stealing their crops, leaving nothing for them or their livestock. See [Judges 6](#). This went on for seven years and the people cried out under the affliction. In answer to their cries, God came to Amos, telling him that he would deliver his people from their bondage. Here is Amos's response, so much like ours would be: *Judges 6:13-14 KJV 13 And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. 14 And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?* It is interesting that God did not directly answer Amos's question when he asked God, why they suffered if He was with them. Is there a lesson in this for us today? Is God saying that He was with them during this punishment and suffering? Would that not indicate, that even if we mess up and suffer for it, that He will be with us in our suffering? You can read the whole story for yourself; it's incredibly amazing how God used Amos and three hundred men, to deliver the Israelite people. God saw them in their suffering, and in His time, delivered them. Albeit, He delivered them in such a way that it tested their faith, and God received the honor.

Many people suffer from the choices they have made. Substance and alcohol abuse, and lifestyles, may bring on suffering; however, suffering of the innocent is difficult to understand. One may wonder if we have a loving God, how can He allow innocent ones to suffer. Could it be that God does not want us to know the answer to this deep question? Someday there will be an answer, and we will see clearly, but until that time we have to do with sin, pain, and suffering.

For evil to be evil, or bad to be bad, there must be good. Bad and evil are so, because they destroy good; otherwise they would not be bad or evil.

Our first parents fell in the garden of Eden, because Satan the deceiver, the essence of evil, sought occasion against God, by causing evil to seek dominion over that which was perfect and good. It is true that God made the ability for there to be evil, he made Satan, Son of the Morning, Lucifer, beautiful and mighty in power. I suppose without God allowing Lucifer a certain liberty of choice, he would not have exalted himself in heaven. *Isaiah 45:7 KJV I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.*

For worship to be worship, there needs to be a choice. God could have created man like robots to worship him. However, how much praise and honor would there be to God, if we had no choice but to serve Him? Honor and praise come when man chooses to serve God because he has a choice. Without choice there is no honor; to have a choice means you must have things to choose from, which in this case is good and evil. Man is placed in this world as a creature of choice, and therefore has the choice of good and evil.

God placed judgment upon man, for the choice they had made. See [Genesis 3:16-19](#). He said that life would be fraught with all manner of difficulty. He does not say there will be pain and suffering, but He does say there will be sorrow, the ground would be cursed, and man must make a living by the sweat of his brow. No longer is man able to live in the Garden, eating of the provisions which God provided for him. By listening to the serpent and sinning against God, man could not remain in the Garden of Eden. They had become creatures of choice, by listening to the tempter and disobeying God.

It did not take long for evil to bring sorrow to our first parents. The family peace was broken when Cain's sacrifice was rejected and his brother's was not. The result of his jealous heart caused Cain to choose to kill his brother Able. This is our first record of man choosing to commit an evil deed, wherefore, coming under the power of evil to commit evil. From then till now, evil continues to attempt to destroy good.

Evil is born of Satan and is part of the unregenerate man. The evidence of evil becomes apparent in children at a very young age. Children are innocent, yet they carry the seed of sin and evil. By nature, they are self-serving, looking out for their own wants and desires. They naturally fight for their rights, and possessions, often at the expense of their playmates. Their parents will do them a favor if they teach them to be kind and loving to those around them. They need to learn to surrender their wills to their parents and those of authority. By doing so, they will grow up choosing to be kind, considerate, and aware of God. When at a young age, a child is taught to surrender to the desires of those of authority in their lives, they will find it easier as adults to listen to authority, of both man and God. This is best accomplished, if their parents are godly parents, who correct them in the fear of God. They will then be best able to teach them the difference between good and evil.

Though everyone carries the potential to be evil, not all men are evil. There are many, many, good hearted, kind, compassionate people who have good intentions towards all men. It does not take a belief in God to give people compassion. However, when a heart experiences the infilling of the Holy Spirit, he is given part of the Divine nature of God, which is love. See [2 Peter 1:4](#) God has given gifts into man and this includes the gift of compassion. When those gifts are used in accordance with God's will, to do His work, He naturally becomes the opposite of evil.

Evil does not want to be governed. Evil simply wants to do its own thing regardless of what happens to others. Evil is evil because it opposes good. An evil man is one who is driven by his own lusts for power and mastery. He can have power and mastery over other evil men, but that is still evil. Evil is evil when it serves self at the expense of others.

In this broken world evil grows as man departs further from God, choosing more and more to allow himself liberties which are against nature and God. This is fulfillment of prophecy, that in the last days, man would become more and more evil, because of their departure from God and love for themselves. See [2 Timothy 3:1-9](#).

We have given quite a bit of consideration to evil as being something that destroys good. It is easy to understand why there is suffering when men choose evil over good, and they hurt each other. On the other hand, it is more difficult to understand when people suffer from diseases and sickness which are beyond the control of man. It may be a temptation to view unexplained sickness, pain, and suffering as a judgment from God, for something we have done. In essence, "cause and effect." If someone is suffering, they must have done something to bring it on themselves. In the Old Testament era, they would blame the parents if the children suffered birth defects and maladies. However, when Jesus healed the blind man, He debunked that myth. *John 9:1-3 KJV 1 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. 2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? 3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.* Much of the unbidden pain and suffering is not the result of choice, but the result of living in a broken world. *Ecclesiastes 9:11-12 KJV 11 I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all. 12 For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.*

The possibility of disease and sickness came with the fall of man into sin. Our hearts nearly break when we see and hear about all the innocent children around the world, who suffer from misfortune, hunger, neglect, pain, and abuse. We wonder how God could allow such to happen! Many people suffer from situations beyond their control in which they personally have had no choice. Other times, pain and suffering are a result of choice. Not necessarily the choice of the individual, but possibly of parents and grandparents who did not know any better, living out their existence from the choices of their forbearers. God does not interfere with man's choice to serve Him or not. Whither or not man chooses God's way, it can affect generations of people. This is especially true when people fail to choose God's ways, and follow ungodly practices. Their choices then negatively affect their innocent children and their children's children, and eventually tribes and countries. That being said, it does not prevent anyone from finding peace in their hearts with God. In fact, historically God's children have been of the poor and destitute of the earth. *James 2:5-6 KJV 5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? 6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?*

When man chooses God, it does not mean there is no suffering, or that things will go well with them. We still live in a broken world full of suffering. Just because one commits their heart and life to Christ does not guarantee there will not be suffering; quite the opposite can hold true. They may be scorned by family and friends or be forced to quit their occupations which are not compatible with being a Christian. This is not uncommon for those who choose to follow Jesus. Jesus Himself suffered of men and was finally put to death. We should not think it strange that His followers should experience anything less. In fact, when we enter a life with Him, we also become partakers of His suffering. For the true follower of Christ, His peace, supersedes any physical suffering or persecution they may bear. *Hebrews 11:25-26 KJV 25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; 26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.*

Evil and good cannot coexist together in peace; evil will always seek to destroy good.

Adam and Eve were not inherently evil when God drove them from the Garden and cursed the earth. Evil came as a result of the choice they made, when they listened to the serpent. Pain, sorrow, and sickness came because they are a part of the fall of man. When God punished Adam and Eve, He did not cast them away, but they and their posterity have had to suffer as a result of their choice. God did not cast them away but through sacrifice, made a way for them to draw near to Him amidst their pain and suffering. Likewise, God has made a way for us, through the gift of Jesus to draw near and receive strength in suffering. One should not think that he is rejected of God if he or she experiences suffering to the body. Rather they should draw near to God, allowing Him to supply strength and courage despite bodily suffering.

God calls man through their suffering. Without pain and suffering, there would be little reason to seek God. Many people have turned to God in suffering and have found comfort and healing for the soul. Many have also prayed for healing of the body, and yet God does not choose to do so; instead, God has given them acceptance and peace when they surrender their future to Him.

While Jesus was on the earth, He healed many, many people of all manner of sickness and disease. At times this may cause us to question why God does not do the same for us today. We know He could, and we are no less special to Him than they were back then. Could it be, because in suffering man brings more glory to Him? *2Co 4:16-18 KJV 16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; 18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.* Does our answer lie in surrendering our wills to an all-mighty God, who knows best?

Paul also struggled with an affliction for which he was not healed. He said he asked three times for healing, and God told him that His grace would be with him in his suffering. See [2 Corinthians 12:7-10](#)

Most often when Jesus healed people, He appealed to their faith. Today, if He literally came to earth to heal us, He would no doubt require the same faith of us as He did of them. That same faith today can help us accept His will for us. He may not heal the body, but if we ask Him, He will heal the soul.

God deals with man according to knowledge. In places where the gospel has been preached and taught, man has more awareness of God, and therewith is more responsible. However, in places where idolatry and evil worship is performed; God may extend His grace in miraculous ways in order to save mankind. There are many stories how Jesus reaches out through dreams and miracles to those who are trapped in ignorance, under the power of spiritual darkness. Darkness does not hide anyone from God. *Psalms 139:11-12 KJV 11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. 12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.*

Man has an inborn desire to worship a higher power, which is evident by the many religions around the world. No doubt, this propensity to worship, has been placed there by God, for His purpose, to cause men to seek Him, who is the source of all strength. Many of these religious practices only bring about more suffering, through darkness and oppression. They may give an outward appearance of worship, which partially satisfies that need in man, yet it does not set the spirit free. God longs to reach those who are trapped in these false religions and show them His grace, peace, and freedom. He is not limited, where there is sin, there also He extends His grace. See [Romans 5:20](#).

Man's quest for his personal existence, as well as the world around him, is sure to speak to him of God. Surely, men, women, and children around the world, sometime or other begin to question life itself. "Where did I come from? Where will I go when I die? Who causes grass to grow, and made the plants and animals? Why do the gods I pray to not really change my circumstances? Why do I feel sad inside?" All these are ways that God uses to call men to Himself. He bears long with them, desiring to save them in their suffering. He does not pressure, but He speaks in everything He can to call all men to Him. Yes, He uses pain and suffering as well. The choices which Satan made for evil, God uses for good, to draw His creation back to Him.

The Unlikely Writer

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