

The Problem of Human Suffering

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Introduction: When someone looks at the suffering of this world they may conclude there is no God.

- A. What appears to be unfair always needs to be seen in light of eternity.
 - 1. David briefly thought that serving God was in "vain" until he thought further. **(Psa 73:11-17)**
 - 2. We too need to be careful not to jump to conclusions when adversity comes into our lives. Our God is alive and active!
- B. Still there are situations that cause us to reflect.
 - 1. Consider a child born into the world with an illness that bankrupts his parents and the child dies. Why does this happen?
 - 2. We need to understand that our inability to find answers does not deny the existence of God! There are many things that God has not revealed to us. **(Deut 29:29)**
 - 3. We need to have the wisdom of Job and never blame God. **(Job 2:9-10)**
 - 4. Consider some truths we do know that will help explain suffering.

I. God has given man free agency.

- A. **Man has the power of choice. (Ecc 7:29; Josh 24:15)**
 - 1. God in His wisdom chose to make man with a free will. We are not robots.
 - 2. The ability to choose holds both great blessings and great dangers.
 - 3. For those who trust God the Bible tells us how to choose!
- B. **God has not foreordained all things. (Jer 32:35)**
 - 1. The very presence of evil should show us that God in making man with a free will allowed for the possibility of sin.
 - 2. God does not bring about sin! **(Jas 1:12-13)**
 - 3. God does however use sinful men in their craftiness to accomplish His will. **(1 Cor 2:6-8; 3:19-20; Rom 9:17-18)**
- C. **Satan and the sin he introduced is the source of all suffering.**
 - 1. God made this world free of sin and good. **(Gen 1:31)**
 - 2. After the introduction of sin both man and creation were changed. **(Gen 3:16-19)**
 - 3. Satan makes full use of man's vulnerability to capture them to his cause. **(Heb 2:14-15)**
 - 4. Those who are in fellowship with God have God's protection from Satan. **(1 Cor 10:13; Job 1:8-12)**
- D. God will bless in eternity those who choose Him in this life. **(2 Thess 1:6-7)**
 - 1. This life is not fair! But to the Christian this is not the issue.
 - 2. We choose to let God even things out in the judgement.

II. There are several reasons for suffering.

- A. **When physical law is violated.**
 - 1. God does not suspend physical law that man may avoid the consequences!
 - 2. Consider the rules surrounding: gravity, fire, water, darkness and light. (Ex. Smokers on a call-in program)

B. When spiritual law is violated.

1. When we sin there is a just consequence in this world. (**Gal 6:7-8; 1 Pt 4:15**)
2. Consider the earthly consequences of fornication. It destroys relationships, cheapens life, separates from God and causes others to lose respect for you!

C. When others make wrong choices.

1. Sadly many suffer because of a choice of a family member. (**Josh 7:24-25**)
2. We suffer from the choice of Adam and Eve. (**Rom 5:12**)
3. While I may suffer the consequences of others actions, I do not bear their guilt! (**Ezk 18:2, 20**)

D. When natural disasters occur.

1. Both good and evil people suffer the effects of a natural calamity.
2. Birth defects and some diseases fall into this category.
3. We need to be careful about accessing blame! (**Jn 9:1-3**)

III. There is a great value in suffering

A. God will always use suffering for His good. (Rom 8:28)

1. What did Joseph learn about his suffering? (**Gen 50:19-20**)
2. We may never see the ways God uses tragedy in our lives. We must trust God!

B. Suffering can allow us to be better acquainted with God.

1. Suffering should humble us. (**Isa 37:1-4**)
2. We need to see the brevity of life. (**Psa 90:12**)
3. Job in all of his suffering came to know God better. In this he was greatly blessed! (**Job 42:5-6**)
4. Thank God for slowing you down and the time He has given you to consider Him.

C. Suffering can cause us to develop greater spiritual qualities.

1. We learn that we have a genuine faith. (**Rom 5:3-4; 1 Pt 1:6-7**)
2. We learn the value of waiting on the Lord. (**Jas 1:2-4**)
3. We have a stronger hope. (**Rom 8:18**)

"The soul would have no rainbow if the eyes would have no tears"

D. Suffering can increase our influence for the Lord.

1. Many who suffer and quietly stand have a powerful influence. (**1 Pt 2:11-12; 4:12-16**)
2. Please never forget the great opportunity you have in suffering. (Ex. A godly wife caring for a critically ill husband for years)

E. Suffering can allow us to help others in their suffering. (2 Cor 1:3-5)

1. You cannot imagine what Christians at this church have experienced in their lives but remained faithful.
2. There are many here who would gladly share valuable wisdom with others if given the chance.
3. There is a great joy in helping others who are going down the paths you have trod.

Conclusion: Let us be faithful wherever this life may lead. (**Phil 4:12-13**)

- A. What will you remember in eternity?

B. As Christians we can view suffering as an opportunity. Do you? (**Phil 1:27-30**)