

Why Does God Allow Suffering?

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2 Cor. 5:1-5

There is a question which is as old as the first tear, and as recent as the latest newscast:

“Why does God allow suffering, sorrow, heartache, and death, even among His own children?”

This question was asked by Job, and has been asked by nearly every person who has walked upon the face of the earth and who believes in God.

It was asked by Christians who have suffered from accidents, themselves.

The purpose of this lesson is not to determine the ORIGIN or CAUSE of suffering, but to better understand:

- Why God allows it.
- Why Christians can even rejoice in the midst of trials!

The first reason is...

Suffering keeps this world from becoming too attractive

The Bible tells us that we are “pilgrims” and “sojourners”.

This world is not truly our home. God has prepared something better for us.

Consider the following passages:

- 1 Pet. 2:11, *“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul,”*
- Heb. 13:14, *“For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”*
- 2 Cor. 5:1, *“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”*
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If there was no suffering...

- No one would want to leave this temporary world.
- No one would desire the “eternal” home, and therefore prepare themselves for it.

If their interest was primarily in things of this world there would be little interest in the things of God.

But the affairs of this life are so ordered that the world soon loses its attraction. Most young people may want to live forever, but by the time a man reaches his “three score and ten” he begins to desire something better.

Suffering can bring out our best

A person seriously injured can see this...

- In the constant support by friends.
- In the preparation of food.
- In the financial support.

We see this occurring quite frequently...

- In times of natural disaster.
- When someone loses a house to fire, tornado, etc.
- In times of terminal illness.

This may be one reason why early Christians rejoiced in their trials. They understood that tribulations could develop character.

As Paul wrote in Rom. 5:3-4, *“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope.”*

Suffering gives an occasion to silence the enemies of God.

Remember the story of Job? Satan wanted to prove God wrong about Job, that he served God only because God had blessed him. But Job’s patience under suffering silenced Satan!

Likewise, God desires that we silence “foolish men”.

1 Pet. 2:15, *“For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.”*

Foolish men who ridicule the teachings of Christ as foolishness. Foolish men who say we are Christians only for what good we can get out of it.

How? By patiently enduring, or doing good in times of suffering.

The value of being Christians really shines through in the faith we have that sustains us in suffering, and in the love we show towards those who suffer.

Suffering makes us better in so many ways

Suffering makes us appreciative. We all receive so many good things in this life; it is easy for us to take them for granted, instead of receiving them with gratitude toward God.

Suffering can help us appreciate more fully...

- Good health.
- Good friends, and a loving family.

A good example of how suffering can make one appreciative is the Apostle Paul when he was in prison.

Phil. 1:3-8, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ."

Suffering makes us more dependent upon God.

Too often, we think ourselves self-sufficient. But when a dozen of the most skilled men in their profession tell you they have done all they can and it is completely out of their hands, you suddenly realize how much you depend on God.

At no other time is one more likely to realize that we depend upon God for our very breath! As Paul proclaimed:

Acts 17:28, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."

Suffering helps purify us.

Consider the import of two passages...

- 1 Pet. 1:6-7, *“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”* Suffering can be like fire purifying gold.
- James 1:2-5, *“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”* Maturity can be developed through trials.

To illustrate how, consider something I read about these words of a man whose wife was injured in an accident:

“Many times I searched my own life during these moments in order to confess my every failure and shortcoming to God. I did not want my own sins to stand in the way of God hearing my prayers for my wife. It was absolutely necessary to be truthful with God and myself, and I am a better man today than before.”

I had a popular friend in high school that had multiple sclerosis who was wheel chair bound that did not let her handicap hinder her personality and attitude.

Suffering makes us sympathetic.

Paul wrote of this value of affliction to the church at Corinth, in his second epistle.

2 Cor. 1:3-4, *“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”*

It helps us to be better able to comfort others in their affliction.

We may think we can sympathize with someone, but until we have been there personally, there is no true understanding of their hurt.

Experiencing suffering makes us more likely to share their sorrow.

Rom. 12:15, *“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”*

Experiencing suffering enables us to serve others better.

Suffering teaches us how to pray.

We all may be a praying people. We pray at the right times. We pray for the right things. But in the midst of suffering we learn how to pray...

- “Earnestly”.
- “Perseveringly”.
- “With groanings which cannot be uttered”.

Rom. 8:26, *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”*

The man whose wife was injured said “I have been a praying man since I became a Christian. But never like this. “I have learned more about prayer in the past few weeks than in the previous twenty years. My prayers will be different for the rest of my life.”

Conclusion.

Can we begin to see why a RIGHTEOUS and MERCIFUL God would allow suffering, even to the innocent?

If we look at suffering purely from MAN’S point of view, we will not understand why suffering is permitted.

But remember what God said through the prophet Isaiah:

Isa. 55:8-9, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

When we look at suffering from GOD’S point of view, from the viewpoint of His plans for us in preparation of eternity, then we can begin to appreciate why He would allow suffering to occur...

And never forget those words of Paul, which reminds us of God’s never-failing love:

Rom. 8:35-39, *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature,*

shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

May God be praised!

