

Why Does God Allow People To Suffer?

The Bible tells us in Revelation 21:4 that there is coming a time when all sorrow, tears, pain and death will pass away. There's coming a wonderful day when God will wipe away all tears from the eyes of His children, and our sorrow will end forever. Dear reader, I hope you are a Christian, so you too may claim this blessed promise that God has made to those who have come to know Him through His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. There's a great day coming for those who have been saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, for this present time, we must face the undeniable fact that people do suffer. That's a fact of life. You can find sickness, sorrow, and suffering in all walks of life. It's everywhere you look. This very moment you can probably think of someone very close to you who is suffering greatly, and it just doesn't seem fair. Why does God allow it to happen? Does God even care? If God is so good and holy, then why doesn't He put an end to all suffering and pain? Keep reading, for there is a reason.

The Beginning of Suffering and Sorrow

There was a time on this earth when suffering and sorrow did not exist. When God first created man upon the earth, everything was perfect. There was no sickness, no pain, no sorrow of any kind. It was God's plan for man to live in peace and harmony never having to experience sorrow. According to Genesis chapter three, it wasn't until man chose the way of Satan, rather than the way of God, that sorrow entered the world. Man sins against God in Genesis 3:6-7, and God reveals to Adam and Eve the consequences of sin in Genesis 3:16-19. God told Adam and Eve that they would now experience *SORROW* and *DEATH*. Therefore, the suffering and sorrow that you and I face today is not the work of an unjust God; it's the consequences of sin. We suffer because we are sinners. Romans 6:23 says, *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Friend, we suffer and die because of SIN.

You say, "I didn't do anything wrong. Why am I a sinner?" We are all born with a sin nature. We inherited our fallen sin nature from Adam and Eve. Romans 5:12 says, *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"* We read in Romans 3:23 that ALL HAVE SINNED and come short of the glory of God. Why do we suffer? We suffer because we are sinners by nature.

Some People Suffer for the Salvation of Lost Souls

Perhaps you are thinking, "Well, what's the point? What does God accomplish by allowing us to suffer?" Very simple: He's trying to tell us something. By allowing people to suffer, God is showing us that SOMETHING IS WRONG. If everything were alright between man and God, then there would be no sorrow and death, because in the beginning there was none. God is showing you every day of your life that man has been SEPARATED from Him because of sin, and that man is destined to an eternity in Hell Fire unless he comes to God for help. The fact that God allows suffering and agony today proves that He will allow it in eternity as well.

God doesn't ENJOY seeing anyone suffer, but He does ALLOW people to suffer for various reasons. If you've never received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, then God wants you to see your need to do so. Sometimes God has to allow tragedy to enter a life in order to get someone to look to Him for Salvation. As someone has said, "Some people won't look up to God until He puts them on their back." This is sad, but true. There are many people who would still be lost in their sins if God had not brought some tragedy into their life to get their attention.

Do you suppose the leper of Matthew 8:2 would have come to Jesus if he'd been in perfect health? What about the blind man of Luke 18:35? II Kings chapter five tells the story of Naman, the Syrian captain who had leprosy. Had this man not had leprosy, he would never have turned to God. The Bible is filled with cases where God reaches people through suffering. Nebuchadnezzar didn't fear God until God humbled him by making him spend seven years of his life on his hands and knees like an animal (Dan. 4:30-37).

Sometimes He will even use the tragedy of one to bring OTHERS to Christ. Such is the case with Lazarus in John chapter eleven. Lazarus was very sick, but before he ever died Jesus said that his sickness was *"for the glory of God"* (Jn. 11:2-4). Later, in John 11:45, we read that *". . . many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him."* We also read in John 12:11 that many believed on the Lord Jesus Christ BECAUSE OF LAZARUS. Had Lazarus not suffered and died, these people may never have come to know the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, God was in complete control. Jesus KNEW that Lazarus was sick, but He chose not to go and heal him (Jn. 11:6). He had a REASON for the sorrow and death in the family of Lazarus. No one suffers in vain. God always has a reason, and sometimes He is trying to show someone their need to receive the Lord Jesus Christ. Could this be true in your own life? Think about it. Could the Lord be convicting you of the fact that you are a sinner, and you need to be saved?

Some Christians Suffer Because of the Chastisement of God

As a Christian, it is my duty to live a Christ-honoring and obedient life before God. If I become disobedient, the Bible says that my Heavenly Father will rebuke and chasten me (To "chasten" is to punish or correct for moral improvement.) Revelation 3:19 says, *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."* Notice these important words from Hebrews 12:6-8: *"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."* Just as any responsible father disciplines his children when they become disobedient, God disciplines His children. Paul says in I Corinthians 11:31-32 that we can often avoid God's chastisement by JUDGING OURSELVES instead of ignoring our sins, thus forcing God to judge us. Addressing Christians, John tells us that, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (I Jn. 1:9) It is my Christian responsibility to do my very best to live a sinless life, but when I do sin I must repent and CONFESS my sins to God. If I choose not to do so, then I am being a disobedient child, and my Heavenly Father will rebuke and chasten me. Sad as it may be, many Christians are going through tragedy today because they refuse to confess their sins to the Lord and repent.

Some Christians Suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ

II Timothy 3:12 says, *"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."*

Then II Timothy 2:12 says, ***"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him..."*** Jesus said, ***". . . . If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."*** (Lk. 9:23) When a Christian chooses to deny himself and follow Christ, he (or she) chooses to suffer for the Lord. The world has always found a way to persecute God's people, and we should not be surprised when persecution arises. Jesus suffered for us, and we should count it an honor to suffer for Him. In Acts 5:41 the Apostles REJOICED that they were counted worthy to suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ! Jesus said that we SHOULD rejoice when we suffer for His sake, because GREAT is our reward in Heaven (Mt. 5:12). I Peter 2:19-21 tells us that it is our duty to follow our Lord's example in suffering, and I Peter 4:12-16 tells us to be happy when we suffer for Christ, and it tells us not to be ashamed. Some people are going through hard times today because, like Moses, they CHOSE to suffer affliction with the people of God, instead of enjoying the pleasures of sin (Heb. 11:25). Such people may appear to have gotten an unfair deal from God, but the Bible says they are truly blessed, for they have many treasures laid up for them in heaven (Mt. 6:19-21; I Cor. 3:11-15). Romans 8:18 says, ***"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."*** We read in I Peter 5:10 that our suffering in this present world is only for ***"a while."*** Are you willing to bear your cross for the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you have any treasures in Heaven? Are you willing to suffer for the Lord?

God Teaches Us Valuable Lessons Through Suffering

Not all suffering Christians are disobedient Christians. There are many very dear Christians who go through great agony every day, yet they are some of the sweetest and most God-fearing saints you'll ever meet. Why does God allow them to suffer? There are many reasons.

One reason is humility. If we believed some of the popular "Faith Healers" of our day, we'd believe that people suffer because they lack faith in God, but this isn't necessarily true. The Apostle Paul didn't live in sin and he didn't lack faith in God, but he DID have to suffer. Why? He tells us why in II Corinthians 12:7: ***"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."*** Whatever this thorn in the flesh was, verses eight and nine tell us that God chose NOT to take it from Paul. Instead, He chose to give Paul the GRACE to bear the burden. God used this problem in Paul's life to help keep him humble, to keep him from being exalted above measure.

Sometimes God sees the need to put us through some things for the purpose of making us stronger. Paul tells us in II Timothy 2:3 to, ***". . . . endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."*** You know, many times a drill sergeant will put a soldier through some things just to make him tough, just to see how much he's willing to take--how dedicated he is. There may not seem to be any logical reason for the trouble that we often face, but God always has a reason. Sometimes He's just trying to make us tougher. According to Galatians 5:22, a Spirit-filled Christian is supposed to be LONGSUFFERING. Are you longsuffering? Are you willing to "tough it out" for the Lord?

God will also use suffering to teach us patience. Romans 5:3 tells us that, ***". . . . tribulation worketh patience. . . "*** Remember Job? God allowed Satan to take Job's oxen, his asses, his sheep, his camels, his servants, his children, and even his health. Yet, the Bible says, ***". . . . In all this did not Job sin with his lips."*** (Job 2:10) In the latter end God restored to Job TWICE as much as he originally had (Job 42:10). Are you willing to trust God and patiently wait for His deliverance when trouble comes your way?

Some people suffer so that they will be better equipped to comfort others in their suffering (II Cor. 1:3-4). It's always a blessing to know someone who has gone through the same troubles that you are going through, for they usually have some helpful words of comfort and wisdom. Are you going through some pretty tough times? Maybe the Lord is giving you the experience that you'll need to help someone else later.

Friend, as you can see, there are a number of reasons why God allows people to suffer. He always knows what is best, and He never makes a mistake. David said, ***"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes."*** (Psa. 119:71) The Apostle Paul, one who suffered greatly, said these words in Romans 8:28: ***"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."*** He also said, ***"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."*** (Philip. 4:13)

The Lord Jesus Christ suffered for us all, that we might have eternal life. The curse of suffering and death entered this world because of sin, but we can escape the curse through the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, ***". . . I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."*** (Jn. 14:6) There is coming a day when all suffering will end for those who know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. Revelation 21:4 says, ***"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."***

Have you received Jesus Christ as your Savior?

The Bible says that you can receive Christ by BELIEVING on His name (Jn. 1:12). He paid for your sins, and by CLAIMING Him as your Savior--resting in His finished Blood Atonement for your sins--you can be saved! Romans 4:5 says, ***"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."*** Ephesians 2:8-9 says that you are saved by GRACE THROUGH FAITH, not by your works. God is not wanting you to do good works to get to Heaven, for there is none that doeth good (Rom. 3:10). ***"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."*** (Rom. 3:23) You do not need God to judge your good deeds and your evil deeds; you need a SAVIOR to save you from your sins. Jesus Christ is the Savior. If you'll call upon Him for Salvation, trusting Him Alone to save you, He'll save you and give you eternal life. It's that simple. ***"For if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."*** (Rom. 10:9) Romans 10:13 says, ***"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*** Why not call upon Him right now? Tomorrow may be too late.

If you need more information about Salvation through Christ, please send for a free copy of *Understanding God's Salvation Plan*.

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