

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW HUMAN SUFFERING?

A. Many have asked, “If God wants us to believe He loves the world, why does He allow so much human suffering.”

1. In our introductory lesson, we noticed two Biblical answers to this question.

I. TO DIMINISH THE APPEAL OF PHYSICAL LIFE
(2 Cor 5:1-5; Heb 13:14)

II. TO MAKE US LIKE HIS SON & BRING OUT OUR BEST
(Rom 8:29; Gal 4:19; Col 1:27; Rom 5:3-4)

2. But there are several more answers to the question, which God has given to us in His word.

[A **Biblical study** on human suffering can accomplish at least two results. **First**, it will provide us with the information we need to give a credible response – as to the reason for suffering – to skeptics of the Bible. **Secondly**, it will provide God’s people with the information we need to remain optimistic & hopeful in a suffering world, which gives us reason to rejoice in the Lord when & while we are suffering.]

{Why does God allow suffering?}

III. TO HELP US PURIFY OUR FAITH IN HIM
{He knows that our faith must be proven or it will die.}

A. (1 Pet 1:7) Peter told us that “various trials” come upon us to test or prove “the genuineness of our faith”.

1. Before an airplane can be put into public use, it goes through many stress trials & wind tunnels to prove its flight worthiness.

2. Peter tells us that “fiery trials” can burn away the impurities in our faith (1 Pet 4:12), by forcing us to choose whom we will serve & obey, thus proving our worthiness to serve Christ.

B. (1 Pet 2:20) Peter also said it is “commendable before God” when His people patiently endure grief from suffering wrongfully. – *That’s Faith Purified!*

C. Job lost everything he owned, & yet he “did not sin nor charge God with wrong”, but rather he “blessed the name of the LORD” (1:22). – *That’s Faith Purified!*

D. James reminded us that our faith must be shown by our works, otherwise our faith is dead & ineffective to justify us before God & to save us (Jas 1:14-26).

1. And sometimes it takes a little suffering to put our faith to work for God.

2. Times of suffering are critical moments when we can either prove or disprove what we claim to believe.

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IV. TO TEACH US TO BE CONTENT & THANKFUL
{He wants us to acknowledge that He & He alone will supply what we need.}

- A. **Sometimes** the only way we can learn to be content with what God has given us, & to be thankful for those things, is by losing our grip on the things we don't really need.
1. I think the people who owned the Humvees, & who are now trying to get rid of them, will be more than content & thankful for their Ford Explorer.
 - a. They found out they just really didn't need the Humvee.
 2. Well Paul never owned an automobile, but before he became a Christian he had had a lot going for himself from a human point of view.

Phil 3:3-8 – For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, & have no confidence in the flesh, 4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But *what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ*. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, & count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

Phil 4:11-13 – Not that I speak in regard to need [in prison!], *for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content*: 12 *I know how to be abased, & I know how to abound. Everywhere & in all things I have learned both to be full & to be hungry, both to abound & to suffer need*. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

1. Paul learned to be content & thankful through his sufferings &, in fact, because of them.
2. The Lord made Paul turn loose of everything he didn't really need in order to serve Christ.
3. Paul never prayed to God about those things he didn't have; he was thankful to God for what he did have (**Read Philippians 1:3-11**).

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V. TO TEACH US TO BE PRAYERFUL & DEPENDENT
{He does not want us to forget that He is our Provider.}

- A. **I guess** one the most difficult lessons for us to learn is that we are not self-sufficient.
1. And times of suffering bring that lesson home better than any other time in our lives.
 2. Once we experience suffering & accept our utter dependence on God, then we can become prayerful.
 3. When climbing a mountain (of suffering) you must either stop & give up or look up.

2 Cor 12:7-9 – And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, *a thorn in the flesh was given to me*, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing *I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me*. 9 And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”

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VI. TO PERFECT OUR INNER MAN

{ God will help His children mature in mind & body. }

A. **How many** of you actually enjoyed growing-up?

1. As painful as that time in life is, it played a large part in our being responsible adults.
2. Well God knows even better how to help us grow up; & He never makes a mistake.

Heb 12:6-11 – For whom the LORD loves He chastens, & scourges every son whom He receives.” 7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate & not sons. **9** Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, & we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits & live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now *no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful*; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Jas 1:2-4 – My brethren, *count it all joy when you fall into various trials*, 3 *knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience*. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, *that you may be perfect & complete*, lacking nothing.

3. I met a man one time who told me that he had never had any serious problems in his life.

a. “Beware of the climb”.

Song: “He’s still workin’ on me” – There really ought to be a sign upon my heart, ‘Don’t judge him yet, there’s an unfinished heart.’ But I’ll be perfect just according to His plan, & fashioned by the Master loving hand.”

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VII. TO HELP US DEVELOP COMPASSION

{ Our Father wants us to have the same concern for others that He has. }

A. **It is** difficult to understand the suffering of others when we have not experience much of it.

1. If that is the case, then we certainly cannot be sympathetic or compassionate.

1. “Sympathize” (vb) – *to be in keeping, accord or harmony*: to share in suffering or grief.
“Compassion” (n) – sympathetic consciousness of other’s distress together with a desire to alleviate it.

2. Paul could sympathize & be compassionate with other Christians who were suffering, because he suffered so much himself.

2 Cor 1:3-4 – *Blessed be the God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies & God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

3. Therefore, suffering enables us to rejoice with those who rejoice, & weep with those who weep (**Rom 12:15**).

CLOSING

A. I hope we can understand why an all-loving & all-powerful God, a righteous & merciful God would allow suffering in the world.

1. If we only view suffering from man's point of view, we will not understand why God permits it.
2. But when we see it through God's eyes we can begin to appreciate why He allows it to occur (**Isa 55:8-9**).

In our next study,
we will discuss the causes of human suffering.