

**THE PROBLEM OF PAIN
AND SUFFERING**

Last Chance to Suffer

1 Corinthians 13:12

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

Genesis 3:16-19

To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

Genesis 3:16-19

¹⁷ And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;”

Genesis 3:16-19

¹⁸ “thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Revelation 21:1-4

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelation 21:1-4

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

Job 1:8-12

And the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?”

Job 1:8-12

⁹ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear God for no reason? ¹⁰ Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.”

Job 1:8-12

¹² And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.” So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

- 1. God is sovereign over suffering.**
- 2. Innocent suffering is real.**
- 3. The result of suffering must be trust, not understanding.**

“I could never believe in God, if it were not for the cross...In the real world of pain, how could one worship a god who was immune to it?”

“I have entered many Buddhist temples in different Asian countries and stood respectfully before the statue of Buddha, his legs crossed, arms folded, eyes closed, the ghost of a smile playing round his mouth, a remote look on his face, detached from the agonies of the world.”

“But each time after a while I have to turn away. And in imagination I have turned instead to that lonely, twisted, tortured figure on the cross, nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn-pricks, mouth dry and intolerably thirsty, plunged in God-forsaken darkness.”

“That is the God for me! He laid aside his immunity to pain. He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death. He suffered for us. Our sufferings become more manageable in light of his.”

John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*

We have been given mercy because of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:21

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin,
so that in him we might become the righteousness of
God.

Hebrews 4:14-16

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Romans 8:26

the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

“If we...ask the question: ‘Why does God allow evil and suffering to continue?’ and we look at the cross of Jesus, we still do not know what the answer is. However, we know what the answer isn’t. It can’t be that he doesn’t love us. It can’t be that He is indifferent or detached from our condition.”

“God takes our misery and suffering so seriously that he was willing to take it on himself...So, if we embrace the Christian teaching that Jesus is God and that he went to the Cross, then we have deep consolation and strength to face the brutal realities of life on earth.”

Tim Keller, *The Reason for God*

Philippians 1:29

For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.

1. Suffering encourages holiness.

Psalm 119:67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.

2. Suffering produces endurance.

Romans 5:3 but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance.

3. Suffering produces maturity.

James 1:2-4 ² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

4. Suffering teaches us God's word.

Psalm 119:71 It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.

5. Suffering allows us to encourage others.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

6. Suffering breaks us of self-reliance.

2 Corinthians 1:8-9 ⁸ For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. ⁹ Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.

7. Suffering strengthens our assurance of salvation.

1 Peter 1:6-7 ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

8. Suffering glorifies God.

Psalm 73:25-26 ²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you?
And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.
²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the
strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Our lack of understanding is not a reason to distrust. Instead, praise God for what he has revealed through Scripture.