

# The Problem of Evil

God's purposes in suffering and affliction

## The Reality of Evil and Suffering

### **Genesis 3:16-19**

[16] Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. [17] And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; [18] Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; [19] In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

### **Romans 8:20-22**

[20] For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, [21] Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. [22] For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

### **John 16:33**

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

### **1 Peter 4:12**

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

Scripture acknowledges the brutal reality of evil and suffering—it does not minimize pain or offer simplistic answers. After the fall, God pronounced curses affecting all creation: pain in childbirth, toil in work, thorns and thistles, and ultimately death.

The creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who

hath subjected the same; the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. Jesus warned His disciples, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation.' Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.

The Bible is honest about suffering—Job's anguish, David's grief, Jeremiah's tears, Paul's thorn. It records murder, betrayal, disease, disaster, persecution, and death.

The prosperity gospel is false; the health-and-wealth message contradicts Scripture. Believers suffer, often intensely, sometimes inexplicably.

This honesty validates our own suffering and prevents false guilt when trials come. Christianity does not promise escape from suffering but offers resources for enduring it and hope beyond it.

## God's Sovereignty Over Evil

### **Isaiah 45:7**

I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.

### **Amos 3:6**

Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?

### **Lamentations 3:38**

Out of the mouth of the most High proceedeth not evil and good?

### **Job 1:21**

And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

Scripture teaches that God sovereignly governs even evil events, using them for His purposes while never being their author or approver. 'I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.' Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?

Out of the mouth of the most High proceedeth not evil and good? Job, having lost everything, declared, 'The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.' These difficult texts affirm that nothing occurs outside God's sovereign control—even disasters and calamities serve His purposes.

Yet God is not the author of sin; He does not tempt anyone, and His nature is wholly good. The mystery of how God ordains events involving human evil without being culpable for that evil transcends our understanding.

Joseph's brothers meant evil; God meant it for good—both are true. Jesus was crucified by wicked hands, yet delivered by God's determinate counsel.

This truth comforts: our suffering is not meaningless chaos but serves divine purposes. It also warns: God will judge those who do evil, even while using their evil for His ends.

## Purposes in Suffering

### **Romans 8:28-29**

[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. [29] For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

### **James 1:2-4**

[2] My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; [3] Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. [4] But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

### **Hebrews 12:10-11**

[10] For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. [11] Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

### **2 Corinthians 1:3-4**

[3] Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; [4] 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.

God uses suffering purposefully in believers' lives—for sanctification, character development, and eternal good. 'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.' Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

God chastens us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness; it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. The God of all comfort comforts us in tribulation, that we may comfort others.

Suffering exposes hidden sin, strengthens faith, develops perseverance, increases dependence on God, produces compassion for others, and reminds us that this world is not our home. It conforms us to Christ, who learned obedience through suffering.

It prepares eternal glory far outweighing present affliction. Understanding these purposes enables us to embrace suffering rather than merely endure it, to see trials as divine appointments rather than random misfortunes.

## The Mystery of Suffering

### **Job 38:1-4**

[1] Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, [2] Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? [3] Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. [4] Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.

### **Isaiah 55:8-9**

[8] For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. [9] For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

### **Deuteronomy 29:29**

The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

### **Romans 11:33-34**

[33] O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! [34] For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

While Scripture reveals purposes in suffering, it does not explain every instance—some suffering remains mysterious this side of eternity. When Job demanded answers, God answered with questions: 'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.' God never explained to Job why he suffered; He revealed Himself, and that was enough.

'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.' The secret things belong unto the LORD our God.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! We must resist the temptation to explain what God has not explained.

Job's friends erred by offering confident explanations for his suffering. Sometimes the only honest answer is 'I don't know.' We walk by faith, not sight, trusting God's character when we cannot trace His purposes.

The mystery of suffering is not an excuse for unbelief but an invitation to trust the God who understands what we cannot.

# The Cross: God's Answer to Evil

## **Romans 5:8**

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

## **Isaiah 53:4-6**

[4] Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. [5] But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. [6] All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

## **1 Peter 2:24**

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

## **Hebrews 2:10**

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

God's ultimate answer to evil is not explanation but incarnation—He entered our suffering in Christ and conquered evil through the cross. 'God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows... he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree. It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

The cross demonstrates that God is not distant from suffering but entered fully into it. Jesus experienced poverty, rejection, betrayal, injustice, torture, and death.

He cried out in anguish on the cross. Whatever we suffer, He suffered more.

The cross also conquers evil—sin is atoned, Satan is defeated, death is swallowed up in victory. God took the greatest evil (deicide) and produced the greatest good (redemption).

This gives us confidence that He can redeem our sufferings too.

## Hope Beyond Suffering

### **Revelation 21:4**

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.

### **Romans 8:18**

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.

### **2 Corinthians 4:17**

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

### **1 Peter 5:10**

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

The ultimate answer to suffering is eschatological—God promises a future where evil and suffering are forever eliminated. '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.' I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

Present suffering is temporary; future glory is eternal. Present affliction is light; future glory is weighty beyond measure.

This hope does not minimize present pain but puts it in perspective. We groan, waiting for the redemption of our body, but we groan with hope.

The new creation will make all things right. Every tear will be wiped away.

Evil will be judged. Righteousness will reign.

Those who have suffered most will rejoice most in the world where suffering is no more.

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