

Why Does God Allow Suffering?

Introduction: “The World at War”

“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.”
- 1 Peter 4:12

“The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”
- 1 Corinthians 15:26

But isn't God in charge of everything?...

Just because God is all-powerful doesn't mean that He is all-controlling — because that would be unloving.

Seeing Sin As Spiritual Pollution:

1. The world was made good by God.

“God saw all that He had made, and **it was very good**. And there was evening, and there was morning — the sixth day.”
- Genesis 1:31

2. Death and suffering were not part of the original design.

²⁸“God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

²⁹Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground — everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food.”
And it was so.”
- Genesis 1:28-30

3. Human sin has affected all creation.

¹⁷“...but **you must not eat** from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it **you will surely die**.”
- Genesis 2:17

¹⁶“To the woman He said, “I will greatly **increase your pains** in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”
- Genesis 3:16

¹⁷To Adam He said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ “**Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil** you will eat of it all the days of your life. ¹⁸It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”
- Genesis 3:16-19

³“**Everything that lives and moves will be food for you**. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.”
- Genesis 9:3

²³“For **the wages of sin is death**, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
- Romans 6:23

4. Now, all creation groans together. Romans 8:18-23

¹⁸“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the One who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

²²We know that **the whole creation has been groaning** as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”
- Romans 8:18-23

5. Deliverance from decay will happen in partnership with eradication of sin.

⁶“The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. ⁷The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. ⁹**They will neither harm nor destroy** on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.”
- Isaiah 11:6-9

³“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴**He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain**, for the old order of things has passed away.”

⁵He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then He said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”
- Revelation 21:3-5

²⁷“**Nothing impure will ever enter it**, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.”
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How To Live in a World Gone Wrong:

1. War demands sacrifice.

³“Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs — he wants to please his commanding officer.”
- 2 Timothy 2:3-4

2. Seek to know the suffering God experientially, not just intellectually.

“Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.”
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“I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death.”
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3. Look for the good that God can bring out of every situation.

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”
- Genesis 50:20

* 4.* Hurt with those who hurt.

“Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.”
- Romans 12:15

Conclusion - The Suffering of God

²¹“But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²²This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood. He did this to demonstrate His justice, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.”
- Romans 3:21-25

“God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”
- 2 Corinthians 5:19

For Further Study (on your own) or Discussion (in a group)

Ice Breaker

1. After reviewing your sermon notes, think/talk about one thing that was most new, encouraging, or perplexing to you.
2. Have you ever gone through a period of asking disturbing questions about the love and power of God?
 - a) What precipitated it?
 - b) What was most important in helping you through it?

God’s Word Says...

3. Read God’s words of frustration in **Amos 4** as well as Paul’s words of encouragement in **Hebrews 12:5-12**.
 - a) How might some large-scale evils and personal sufferings be God’s way of getting our attention and calling us to repentance? [Note: This is not to say that this is always the case!]
 - b) Can you think of any recent examples that could possibly fall into this category of evil and either corporate/national or personal suffering?
4. What are the key lessons we can draw from **Romans 8:15-39** and **Ephesians 3:14-21** on the issue of God and suffering? Brainstorm a list.
5. What does the Christian world view offer for comfort that no other spiritual or philosophical world view can regarding God and suffering? Where is this found in the Bible?

What Now?

6. Using non-churchy language, try to come up with a sensible answer to the question, “Why should I believe in a good God when the world is so bad?”

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