

ANSWERS TO BASIC QUESTIONS: WHY IS THERE SUFFERING?

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I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Perhaps one of the questions that most puzzles people is why of suffering. Especially in our time with the oversaturation of information and with the alarmist tendency of the mass media; We are increasingly aware of tragedies, disasters, brutalities, deaths and all kinds of disturbing events and that makes us fear and question even more the why of everything that happens.
- B. If we do not have an adequate biblical answer, our faith may falter as we wonder why God allows this? Why didn't he answer our prayer? The direct answer to this question would be simply to acknowledge that suffering entered the world because of sin.

Rom. 5:12 "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned."

- C. This means that everything that happens to those who are not of the family of God is simply a consequence of sin; our own sin and the sin of others; and although this answer sounds very simplistic it is the real and raw reason.

Sant. 4:1-2 "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight...."

II. WHY DO CHRISTIANS SUFFER?

- A. So if the cause of suffering is sin and Jesus already bore the condemnation for sin (**Rom. 8:2**) then why do the People of God still experience suffering?

1 Ped. 4:15-19 "If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. 16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name...."

19 So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good."

- B. According to this text when Christians suffer there is a purpose in the will of God; God allows it, even when Satan may be the immediate cause. This may sound very disconcerting to us, but Paul explains his own experience with the suffering he experienced as a servant of God:

2 Cor. 12:7-10 "...because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness..."

- C. Paul says that the thorn or suffering he suffered was a messenger of Satan who struck him to make him more humble; that is, the sovereignty of God made Satan's messenger a means of keeping Paul from arrogance. That's the kind of God we have.
- D. **God reigns over Satan and over suffering. And therefore, it is okay to resist His suffering in prayer and pray against it and ask God to remove it, as did Paul:**
1 Cor. 12:8 "Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me;"
- E. **God many times does take away suffering in a miraculous and wonderful way, but sometimes He does not do it because He has holy and wise purposes and because He loves us.** So many passages of Scripture show that God is directing the things that constantly happen to us for our great good.
Rom. 8:28 "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."
2 Cor. 4:16-18 "Therefore we do not lose heart.... 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

III. SUFFERING PURIFIES

- 1 Pet. 4:17 "For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?"**
- A. According to this text God's judgment is moving through the earth. And it starts with the church; God's judgment comes on the churches obviously not because God hates us, rather since He loves us so much He will spare nothing to get out of us what He does hate, that is, sin.
Prov. 20:30 "Blows and wounds scrub away evil, and beatings purge the inmost being."
- B. **There is much to purify within us.** We are all imperfect and a large part of God's process of preparing us for heaven is taking hell out of us.
Is. 1:25 "[The Lord says] I will turn my hand against you; I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities."
- C. God's judgment is moving around the world, and as we see it these days, it is increasing and it is not because of global warming. It is moving towards the churches: hundreds, thousands of churches that are under the judgment of God but it is not a judgment for destruction rather it is destined to purify us because He loves us.
Rev. 3:19 "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent."

D. When this judgment moves in the world, it has at least two effects:

1. Wake up people to turn to God:

Is. 26:9 "...When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness."

2. If he resists and does not lead people to repentance, he destroys and condemns them:

Ap. 9:20-21 "The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. ²¹ Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts."

Lk. 13:2-3 "Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? ³ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

- E. But for God's people, who we are "the apple of His eye" (Deut. 32:10; Zech. 2:8), suffering refines and purifies us:

Jer. 30:24-31:1 "The fierce anger of the Lord will not turn back until he fully accomplishes the purposes of his heart. In days to come you will understand this. ^{31:1} At that time," declares the Lord, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they will be my people."

IV. THE RIGHT ANSWER

- A. Many people have received a wrong teaching or simply have an idea of the gospel that is not biblical, it is rather humanistic; They have placed man and his satisfaction as the center and measure of all things, reaching the conclusion that everything that does not benefit man, according to their own expectations, is wrong, even God. Jesus never said that we were not going to suffer, rather He said that in the midst of trials we can find peace in Him.

Jn. 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

- B. When we suffer we unite with Christ and maintain our trust in the sovereignty and unalterable love of God even if it seems contrary to our ideas of prosperity and well-being.

Rom. 8:35-39 "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?... ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

- C. Now more than ever our correct perspective of the events we see and hear from each other on a daily basis allows us to stand firm in the faith without getting carried away by the narrative of the world that accuses God of being unjust.

Pr. 19:3 "A person's own folly leads to their ruin, yet their heart rages against the Lord."

- D. Jesus Himself prayed for His disciples that they would not lose faith as they were to be shaken by Satan himself and they were going to fall.

Lk. 22:31-32 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

- E. It is time to stay in the faith and help others not to lose their faith in Jesus whatever happens, we can do this by praying for them and giving them words of encouragement and understanding.

Is. 35:4 "say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you."

V. REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Share with your Friendship Group if you have been through some kind of suffering lately and honestly talk about how you have felt.
2. According to Scripture, what purpose does God have for the Christian and the non-Christian in the midst of suffering?
3. How can you help someone who is losing faith because of what he/she is suffering? Make up your mind this week to help someone so that her faith is strengthened in the midst of suffering.