

INSIGHT #6.

JESUS UNDERSTANDS OUR PAIN AND SYMPATHIZES WITH US.

In times of need, we can approach the throne of grace in prayer, asking Jesus our High Priest for mercy and grace. He knows our frailties because He endured the same temptations we do (Heb. 4:15-5:2). He alone fully understands us and empathizes with our pain and hardships. (See John 11:32-36.) Jesus promises to walk with believers through all their trials and hardships and never leave them (Heb. 13:5). And since He already knows the outcome, believers can have true peace and comfort during times of tribulation (John 16:33; Heb. 4:11; 2 Cor. 1:3-5). Jesus compassionately invites all people: **“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.... Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”** (Matt. 11:28-29).

INSIGHT #7.

GOD TEMPORARILY PERMITS PAIN AND SUFFERING FOR HIS GOOD (ETERNAL) PURPOSES.

For Unbelievers: God permits pain and suffering to get the attention of unbelievers—precious souls for whom Jesus died—so they may look to Him for salvation and not perish. (See John 3:16; 8:32; 1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9; Matt. 16:26.) Sometimes the Lord shakes our false sense of security in this fragile life in order to “motivate us to strengthen our grip on that which lasts forever (see Luke 13:1-4).”⁵

For Believers: Earthly pain and suffering can serve to:

- Prepare us for our position when we will rule and reign with Christ in His kingdom (Matt. 25:23; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:10; 20:6)
- Test and build our faith, which is precious to God (1 Peter 1:6-7; 2 Thess. 1:3-5; Acts 14:22; Isa. 48:10)

- Encourage us to obey Him, by His enabling grace (2 Cor. 12:8-9; Ps. 119:67, 71; Gen. 32:22-32; Hosea 12:2-4)
- Develop in us character, patience, hope, joy, generosity, etc. (Rom. 5:3-4; 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 8:2; James 1:2-4)
- Prepare us for joy and blessings, sharing in glory with Jesus (Rom. 8:17-18; Heb. 2:10-11; 2 Cor. 4:17-18)
- Equip us to share with others the comfort, love, and life in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 1:4; 4:10-11; 1 John 4:12; Col. 1:24-29)
- Teach us humility and draw us nearer to Him (2 Chron. 33:12; Ps. 34:18; Phil. 3:10; James 4:6-8)
- Provide opportunities for us to glorify our great God (John 9:2-3; Phil. 1:12-14, 27-30; 1 Peter 4:12-13, 16)⁶

For Both Believers and Unbelievers:

Sometimes people suffer as a natural consequence of the choices they make in life, reaping what they sow (Gal. 6:7-8). For example, cheating, lying, and stealing can lead to damaged lives and broken relationships.

CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ declared, **“In the world you will have tribulation [hardships]; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”** (John 16:33). Even though we can’t fully understand why our loving God allows adversity, Christians have three glorious promises: [1] There is purpose in their adversity (Rom. 8:28); [2] God will go through it with them (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5-6); [3] They will experience everlasting joy in heaven and never be separated from God’s love (Rev. 21:1-4; 1 Peter 1:8-9; Rom. 8:17-18).

God offers you His best gifts: His Son, forgiveness, and eternal life. He knew you before time began, and He longs to have a personal love relationship with you. Are you ready to join the family of God and surrender your life to the Lord Jesus Christ?

A PRAYER TO RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST

“Lord God, thank You for Your awesome love and grace. I realize that I am a sinner and that Jesus died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead. Jesus, please forgive me, cleanse me, and be my personal Lord and Savior. God, I want to follow You and have a relationship with You through Your Son. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

A PRAYER WHEN EXPERIENCING PAIN OR SUFFERING

“Dear Lord, thank You for being the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. I need Your touch right now. I know You love me, You’re always with me, and Your plans for me are for good. You bought me at a price, and now I want to live for You. I pray that my suffering will bring glory to Your name. Jesus, You experienced greater pain than I ever will, for You are the Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. You fully understand how I feel. Only You can give me peace and even joy in the midst of this storm. I love You, Lord, and I will trust in You no matter what. For You are the God of the big picture. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

COPIES AVAILABLE AT:

TRUE-WAY TRACTS®

P. O. Box 1258

San Juan Capistrano, CA (USA) 92693

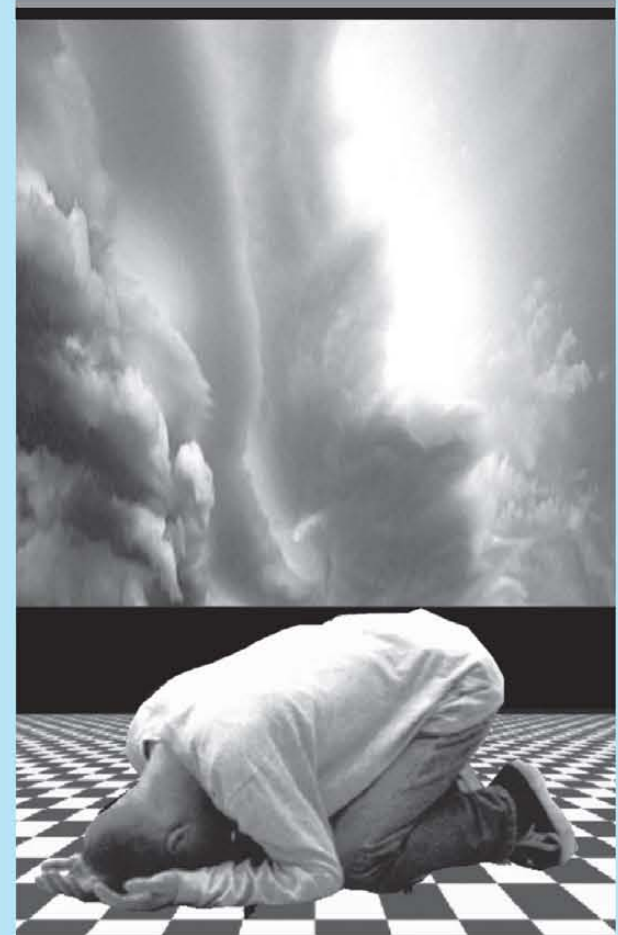
www.truewaytracts.com



REFERENCES: ¹ Wilder-Smith, Dr. A. E. *Why Does God Allow It?* TWFT Publishers, California, ©1990, 58. ² Smith, Chuck. *Teaching Through the Bible*, 7000-8000 Tape Series, The Word for Today, ©2002. ³ Lewis, C. S. *God in the Dock*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Michigan, ©1970, 152-3. ⁴ Wilkinson, Bruce H. “Book of Job Introduction,” *The Open Bible* (NKJV), Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, ©1997, 718-9. ⁵ Kyle, Doug. Message delivered at Green Valley Church, San Diego, CA, on 9/11/05. ⁶ Elliot, Elisabeth. *A Path through Suffering*, Servant Publications, Michigan, ©1990, 197-9.

All Scripture quotations in this publication are from the New King James Version. Copyright ©1982 by Thomas Nelson Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

CAN A LOVING GOD ALLOW PAIN AND SUFFERING?



by m.j. tyner, m.a.
christian apologetics

biblical christianity

Seven Biblical Insights into Why the Loving God of the Bible Allows Suffering

INTRODUCTION

The mystery of misery—why people undergo pain and suffering—has always plagued mankind. This issue is a chief challenge in the existence-of-God debates, and it can take a front seat for us during times of intense suffering. Pain can stir our emotions and turn our lives upside down. Some people, when hurting and angry, even blame God or demand answers from Him.

While we won't fully understand this issue before we get to heaven (Isa. 55:8-9), the Bible teaches that God is sovereign and just, and His essence is love (1 John 4:8). Scripture also provides us with insights that help us understand why our loving God allows pain and suffering. For believers, hardships involve great purpose (Rom. 8:28-29). They can lead to:

- **peace, contentment, and joy**
- **eternal benefits and rewards**
- **a close friendship with God—who sacrificed His Son, Jesus, to offer us the gift of eternal life**

INSIGHT #1.

WE ARE TO VIEW PAIN AND SUFFERING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ETERNITY.

The classical argument often presented by skeptics and atheists is: "If God is loving and all-powerful, why does He allow pain and suffering?" The intent of the argument is to show that the presence of evil creates a logical inconsistency. This apparent disparity,

however, is resolved when we add more information. The loving God of the Bible didn't cause evil; however, He does allow it temporarily for eternal purposes. Our earthly life is like a vapor that's here today but vanishes tomorrow (James 4:14). At present, God is "courting prospective candidates"¹ for His eternal kingdom. There believers will experience supreme happiness. God will make all things new. **"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying...no more pain"** (Rev. 21:4-5).

INSIGHT #2.

WE LIVE IN A FALLEN WORLD, YET GOD WILL DEFEAT EVIL AND RESTORE CREATION.

God originally created the earth and people perfect. But sin and death entered the world when Satan pridefully rebelled against God (Ezek. 28:16-17) and Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:6). Hence, curses were placed on Satan and the human race (Gen. 3:14-19). Now all creation suffers from that fall (Rom. 8:21-23). That's why we experience such things as hunger, strife, and illness. In addition, when man disobeyed God, he also forfeited his rulership over the earth to Satan (1 John 5:19), who brings calamities and blames God for it. However, a glorious day is coming. Jesus, the worthy One, will take back the title deed to earth and restore creation (Rev. 5). God the Father will **"gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and... on earth—in Him"** (Eph. 1:9-10).



Man's point of view:

Life isn't fair.

God's eternal point of view:

Consider why I sacrificed My Son.

Man's point of view:

Pain isn't necessary.

God's eternal point of view:

Pain is a part of this earthly life, but I will go through it with you and it will have purpose.

INSIGHT #3.

OUR LOVING GOD HAS ALLOWED EVIL TEMPORARILY, GIVING US "FREE WILL" CHOICES.

God gave people the capacity and freedom to choose good or evil, and to accept or reject His love. The Bible tells us that God created people to have a relationship with Him. Since a forced love is neither real nor meaningful, He provided us with alternatives. Without free will, people would be like puppets that say, "I love you" whenever their strings are pulled. Our omniscient God looks at the big picture. There is a glorious eternal plan for everyone who chooses to love Him. It's crucial that we consider what's at the end of our earthly path—either glory (eternal life in Christ) or utter desolation (separation from God forever).² Each of us has a choice. **"Enter [heaven] by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it"** (Matt. 7:13).

C. S. Lewis on Free Will

"God has made it a rule for Himself, that He won't alter people's character by force. He can and will alter them—but only if the people will let Him... He would rather have a world of free beings, with all its risks, than a world of people who did right like machines because they couldn't do anything else. The more we succeed in imagining what a world of perfect automatic beings would be like, the more, I think, we shall see His wisdom."³

INSIGHT #4.

GOD'S WAYS ARE SOMETIMES INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO US, BUT HE CAN ALWAYS BE TRUSTED.

We read in the Bible that Job underwent a transforming crisis in his life. God boasted of this blameless and upright man who worshiped God and shunned evil. At Satan's challenge, God allowed Satan to attack His servant Job with painful afflictions and tempt him to curse God (Job 1-2). Yet Job persevered in his faith (Job 13:15; James 5:10-11). Even out of his dark despair, he victoriously cried out, "I know that my Redeemer lives" (Job 19:25-27). In the end, Job was restored to double prosperity, and we have yet to learn of his eternal rewards. While God didn't directly answer Job's "why" question about suffering, He did point out that He is sovereign over all creation and thus worthy of worship no matter what He does.⁴ God declares, **"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts"** (Isa. 55:9).

INSIGHT #5.

JESUS EXPERIENCED THE GREATEST PAIN AND SUFFERING KNOWN TO MANKIND, IN ORDER TO REDEEM US.

Our salvation cost Jesus a torturous death, betrayal, mocking, scourging, and agony of soul (from broken fellowship with God the Father). The punishment for the sins of every person ever born was placed upon Jesus Christ. John the Baptist declared, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Jesus, as the ultimate Passover Lamb foreshadowed in the Old Testament, reconciled us to God by shedding His blood on the cross at Calvary (Rom. 5:8-11; Isa. 53:7). He then rose from the dead (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Out of immeasurable love for us, God sacrificed His own Son. This proves that a God of love can indeed allow pain and suffering. **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"** (John 3:16).