

God offers 'eternal life.' In some situations, suffering leads to Salvation, without which no one will enter Heaven. Suffering can often turn people to God both for help and spiritual salvation, in order to have eternal life beyond this world [Matthew 5:3-12; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2 Timothy 1:8-13; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12].

Also, both God and human experience teach us that suffering can produce Christian character which gives added strength to face the pain [Romans 5:3; 1 Peter 4:12-13].

We are encouraged to pray to God for His intervention; deliverance and healing. However, some people today, including certain church leaders think they have an 'in' with God enabling God to answer their prayers upon demand. This is blatant presumption that is wrong and unbiblical. God is not 'obligated' to anyone.

The believing Christian is not to be presumptuous when making requests, but understand that God may or may not grant a request. He knows our situation and is bound by His will and plan [1 John 5:14]. We are to pray with supplication (realizing our unworthiness) and humbly offer our requests, qualified by 'if it is Your will O Lord' [Cp. Philippians 4:5-6].

Great confusion exists in the Christian church over prayer. When Jesus told His Disciples that they could "ask anything in his name and God would grant it;" [John 14:13,14,26, 15:16, 16:23, 24, 26], He was referring to their judicial powers as

leaders in His earthly kingdom.

Jesus clearly stated that in His coming Kingdom on earth [Matthew 6:10], the Disciples would be His judges [Matthew 19:28]. These promises are unique to them. He was not giving representative power [Matthew 16:19, & 18:18] to all Christians. Christians who try to 'force' God to stand by these promises and give them "whatever they ask in Jesus name" are incorrectly handling the Word of God and producing further heartache.

Until the Lord returns, and removes Satan and his power of inflicting sickness and suffering, we are encouraged to support one another as caring Christians.

We are to seek medical ways to find relief and bear with suffering, knowing that as the apostle Paul said, "our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" in heaven [Romans 8:18].

Of course as Christian believers, we live with the joyous promise of one day going to heaven, where "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying and no more pain" [Revelation 21:4].

## Why Do I Have To Suffer?



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## WHY DO I HAVE TO SUFFER ?

Why does God allow so much suffering, death and destruction in the world?

To arrive at some type of acceptable answer to this question we must consider a number of issues. First, as finite beings, we cannot comprehend the mind of God [Isaiah 55:6–11]; His plan of life on earth [Ephesians 1:11]; nor why He allows suffering [1 Peter 4:19].

This is a brief study and does not deal with all the issues involved regarding suffering. This is a Bible study, not a Medical study. There are some basic facts and truths we must seek to understand from what God says; and what we learn from experience.

### 1. What is the Origin of Suffering?

We need to understand that all sin, sickness and suffering in the world does not originate with God. The Bible teaches us that God is good and loving. James reminds us that, *“Every good action and every perfect gift is from God”* [James 1:17] [ICB].

Sin or rebellion always results in suffering [Genesis 6:5; Psalm 141]. Sin and Satan influence the whole world [Acts 26:18, 2 Timothy 2:25 – 26, Hebrews 2:14]. As a result, mankind is sinful by nature and does evil and hurtful things to himself and others [John 3:19–20, Galatians 5:13-26]. There is no exception, for all sin to some extent and cause hurt [Romans 6:23; 7:11-21; 2 Peter 2; Jude 4-19].

The world and everything in it, is also permeated with evil [Romans 8:19 – 22]. All

sickness, suffering, evil and destruction originates from Satan [1 John 3:8, Revelation 12:9, 1 John 5:19].

### 2. What is the Cure of Suffering?

There is no quick fix. Neither God nor Science provide easy answers. For the Christian, the Bible teaches us that God answers the prayer of faith according to His will [1 John 5:14]. However, thousands pray to God for healing but do not get it. Is God uncaring and unloving? Perish the thought. NO! There are many reasons why God does not stop suffering in the world.

#### Let us consider a few:

**a)** God cannot arbitrarily show favoritism to certain persons and exclude others. He is just and fair, not capricious [Psalm 25 & 36; Job 36; Isaiah 5:16, 9:7, 11:2-5].

**b)** God cannot remove suffering and evil without removing the cause, which is sin and Satan! [Isaiah 65; Revelation 20:2-3]. But if God were to do this, then WHEN should He do it? Every person who has ever lived would want it done in his or her generation. This means we may never have been born and never had the opportunity to be saved [Isaiah 25:22; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:9,15, 2 Corinthians 6:1-3].

**c)** God has an appointed time [Isaiah 65] when He will bind Satan and remove suffering from the earth. [Revelation 20:9, Matthew 13:37–43].

**d)** Suffering is removed at death. If God were to heal people every time they asked Him to, then they would never die. But God

promises that all who go to Heaven will be free from suffering and evil forever [Matthew 6:20; Revelation 21:27]. There is an end to time called ‘eternity’ where there will be no suffering, no evil or pain [Revelation 20:10; & 21].

### 3. What are we to Do about Suffering?

Though suffering is a terrible thing when it happens to us, it is to be honestly faced and recognised as part of the experience of living in a damaged world [John 8:23-24; Hebrews 10:32-37; 1 Peter 4:12-19].

We must respect and accept the help of Medical professionals, who do their best to heal and alleviate pain and suffering. Medical science has produced many wonderful remedies and cures. Political actions provide benefits; and societal movements and support organizations all contribute to the healing process.

The Bible advises the use of medications [2 Kings 20:7, 1 Timothy 5:23, James 5:14], and the use of medical doctors or physicians [Luke 5:31; Colossians 4:14].

The basic wisdom of God is that we are to endeavor to *“Overcome evil with good...”* [Romans 12:21], both in the world and in our lives. Pro-active attitudes and actions assist in dealing with suffering and can aid healing. As Christians, we are encouraged to pray and ask God for strength to cope. We are to face suffering with hope in God and His promise of help and a future reward [1 Corinthians 10:13; James 5:10-11].