

The Problem of Suffering

Who or What Causes It?

TEXT: Job 5:6-7; Psa. 88:9

INTRODUCTION:

- A. OUR LAST LESSON HIGHLIGHTED THE GOOD SUFFERING CAN DO.
- B. WHO OR WHAT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SUFFERING GOD ALLOWS?
 1. Is it the work of God Himself? Or Satan?
 2. Or is it simply natural consequences in a world of cause and effect?
- C. ANSWER NOT ALWAYS CLEAR. BUT THE BIBLE SPEAKS TO IT.

I. MAY BE THE RESULT OF OUR OWN ACTIONS.

- A. GOD HAS CREATED A WORLD GOVERNED BY NATURAL LAWS.
- B. IF WE VIOLATE THESE LAWS, THERE ARE CONSEQUENCES.
 1. Like stepping off a ten story building, or running out in front of a truck.
 2. Or exposing oneself to contagious diseases, chemicals, "junk" food, etc.
- C. IN SUCH CASES, SUFFERING IS EXPERIENCED(**Prov. 6:27-28**).
 1. Because, whether knowingly or unknowingly, natural law has been violated.
 2. Not because we are evil or good, no moral significance to this suffering.

II. THE RESULT OF JUST BEING HERE.

- A. ADAM'S CURSE(**Gen. 3:17-19**).
 1. We are the physical descendants of Adam and Eve(**Gen. 3:20**).
 2. We inherit that which is his physically(**1 Cor. 15:22**).
- B. SOMETIMES WE SUFFER BECAUSE OF OTHERS' DEEDS
 1. A car wreck caused by someone else's carelessness.
 2. Child abuse by an alcoholic parent. **Divorce.**

III. SUFFERING MAY BE THE WORK OF SATAN.

- A. THE BIBLE PRESENTS SATAN AS A CAUSE OF SUFFERING.
 1. As in the case of Job(**Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6**).
 2. As in the case of persecuted Christians(**1 Pet. 5:8-9**).
 3. Satan's objective: **that we might curse God.**
- B. BUT WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SATAN TO TEST US SO?
 1. Because God is able to use such suffering to make us better!
 - a. Paul & his "thorn in the flesh"(**2 Cor. 12:7-10**).
 - b. The trying of our faith can produce good results(**James 1:2-4**).
 2. God acts for those who endure Satan's "shenanigans"(**1 Pet. 5:10**).
- C. WE ARE COMFORTED KNOWING THAT SATAN HAS HIS LIMITS.
 1. As in the case of Job, God will let Satan go only so far.
 2. As promised in Paul's letter to the Corinthians(**1 Cor. 10:13**).

IV. SUFFERING MAY BE THE CHASTISEMENT OF GOD.

- A. BOTH TESTAMENTS TEACH THAT GOD CHASTENS HIS CHILDREN.
 1. In the Old Testament(**Deut. 8:5; Prov. 3:11-12**).
 2. In the New Testament(**Rev. 3:19; Heb. 12:5-8**).
- B. WHAT WOULD BE GOD'S PURPOSE IN CHASTISING HIS CHILDREN?
 1. Certainly not because He delights in doing so(**Lam. 3:31-33**).
 2. But because it may be necessary.

- a. To correct(**Heb. 12:9**).
- b. That we may be partakers of His Holiness(**Heb. 12:10**).
- c. That we may yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness(**Heb. 12:11**).
- 3. Only so we will not be condemned with the world(**1 Cor. 11:32**).
- C. WHEN WOULD GOD CHASTEN US?(**1 Cor. 11:31-32**).
 - 1. Not when we straighten up ourselves.
 - 2. To keep us from being condemned with the world.
- D. HOW DOES GOD CHASTEN HIS CHILDREN?
 - 1. Consider how God tried to correct the erring nation of Israel(**Amos 4:6-13**).
 - a. These were not miraculous or supernatural events.
 - b. But acts of nature brought on by the providential working of God!
 - 2. God also chastises erring children today?(**Heb. 12:5-8**).
 - a. Natural consequences of our action(**Prov. 20:4; 22:5; 23:21, 29-35**).
 - b. Civil and social law(**Eph. 6:4; Rom. 13:1-5**).
 - c. Church discipline(**1 Cor. 5:3-7**).
 - d. Loss of identity as God's people(**Rev. 2:5; 2:20-23**).
 - 3. Suffering should serve to wake us up, cause us to reflect on our lives and our relationship to God, encourage us to repent if we are straying.

CONCLUSION:

- A. WHEN WE EXPERIENCE SUFFERING IT MAY BE
 - 1. We have violated some law of nature.
 - 2. The work of Satan.
 - 3. Chastisement of God.
 - 4. We'll suffer if for no other reason than that we are here.
- B. WE CAN'T ALWAYS DETERMINE WHY, BUT SOMETIMES WE CAN.
- C. HOW THEN SHALL WE REACT TO SUFFERING?
 - 1. Use the occasion to examine our lives and our relationship with God.
 - 2. And then draw closer to God...
- D. GOD IS OUR ONLY SURE SOURCE OF COMFORT(**2 Thess. 2:16-17**).