

# **SUFFERING**

By Rev. Dr. Jerry Schmoyer [jerry@schmoyer.net](mailto:jerry@schmoyer.net)  
<http://www.mainstreetbaptist.org/> - <http://india.mainstreetbaptist.org/>

## **A. WHAT SHOULD BE OUR ATTITUDE TO SUFFERING?**

### **a. UNBELIEVER**

#### **1. Consequences of sin in the universe**

*"Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you ...Genesis 3:17, 18*

#### **2. Consequences of own sin, folly**

FREE WILL CHOICES in which we reap the consequences

Physical care of body, financial misuse of money, treat others wrong  
COMPANY spends \$1 on computers, expert installs them, teach to use  
They leaves, co throws instructional manuals away, does whatever  
things go wrong – blame manufacturer!

#### **3. To Bring to salvation**

### **b. BELIEVER**

#### **1. DESERVED SUFFERING**

a. Consequences of sin in the universe, us all guilty with Adam

*"Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you ...Genesis 3:17, 18*

## **b. Break rules of government, nature**

Disobey laws of nature, gov.

FREE WILL CHOICES in which we reap the consequences

Physical care of body, financial misuse of money, treat others wrong

*PETER: Suffer for Righteousness sake, not for wrongdoing.*

## **c. God's discipline for sin**

Disobey laws of God

and don't confess

To make us more like Jesus

## **2. UNDESERVED SUFFERING**

compare/contrast

**discipline & punishment**

like parent to child

*There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:1*

Judgment for sin: paid for on cross

*He who has begun a good work in you will carry it out until the day of Christ Jesus.*

*Workman stranded on top of building, drops stones to get attention, bigger and bigger, until look up.*

*Shepherd in Palestine -break sheep's leg to cause him to trust God and depend on Him*

*GOD; As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Rev. 3:19*

*The Lord disciplines those He loves, and corrects everyone he accepts as a son. Heb 12:6*

*Blessed is the man whom God corrects, so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty Job 5:17*

*DAVID: Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy word.*

**a. CONFLICT BETWEEN SATAN & GOD** Job 1-2

**b. PRESENTS GOD'S MESSAGE** Hosea

What we go through for God teaches others @ Him

**c. TEACHES OBEDIENCE TO GOD** Heb 5:8 Phil 2:8

*Jesus learned obedience by the things he suffered.  
Heb 5:8*

*God made Jesus perfect (mature) through suffering.  
Hebrews 2:10*

**d. CAUSES US TO LEAN ON GOD'S GRACE**

Paul's thorn in the flesh

*"My grace is sufficient for you", for when I am weak then I am strong. Paul*

**e. BRINGS US CLOSER TO CHRIST** I Peter 1:7-8 Isa 49:2

Makes us more like Jesus:

*DIAMONDS*

*REFINING METALS IN FIRE*

*SMELTING DROSS OUT OF GOLD*

**f. DEMONSTRATES GOD'S POWER** Jn 13:16 16:33 I Pt 1:13

As He works through us

**g. MANIFESTS FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT** II Cor 4:8-11 Eph 5

As we respond by HS within

**h. HELPS OTHERS WHO SUFFER** II Cor 1:3-4

## TRANSITION

I. Why doesn't God destroy suffering?

II. What should be our attitude to suffering?

## **B. HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO SUFFERING?**

### **a. IF UNBELIEVER**

Salvation

### **b. IF BELIEVER IN SIN**

Confess sin

God turns suffering to good

*All things work for the good of those who love God - Romans 8:28*

### **c. IF BELIEVER AND NOT IN SIN**

#### **'OPPOSITE WORLD CONCEPT'**

'He who seeks to save his life will lose it, but he who loses his life for My sake will save it.'

'It is more blessed to give than to receive'

'to live is Christ, to die is gain' – Paul

'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me'

accumulate wealth by giving it away

overcome suffering by embracing it

#### **1. Make sure you are in God's will**

*Those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good. 1 Peter 4:19*

#### **2. Realize it is for our benefit**

*Every branch that bears fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. John 15:2*

*All things work together for Good for the benefit of those who love Him. Romans 8:28*

### **3. Later we will know better why He allows it**

*Jesus said, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." John 13:7*

### **4. Don't be ashamed of suffering, difficulties**

*If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed but praise God that you bear that name. 1 Peter 4:16*

### **5. Trust God and draw closer to Him**

CARTOON: "In chapter one James tells us if we suffer to count it all joy. Now, in chapter five, he tells sufferers to pray. I can do that."

Some days I rejoice; some days I pray.

***For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Hebrews 13:5***

In 1993 Gerald Sittser, a professor at Whitworth College was driving home from a family outing. In the car was his mother, wife of 20 years and four children. A drunk driver swerved across the center line and hit them head on. In an instant he lost his wife, his two year old daughter and his mother. In his book, *A Grace Disguised*, Sittser shares some insights from his painful journey:

"The accident itself bewilders me today as much as it did three years ago. Much good has come out of it, but all the good in the world will never make the accident itself good. It remains a horrible, tragic and evil event to me. Yet the grief I feel is sweet as well as bitter. I still have a sorrowful soul; yet I wake up each morning joyful, eager for what the new day will bring. Never have I felt as much pain as I have in the last three years; yet never have I experienced as much pleasure in simply being alive ... never have I felt so broken; yet never have I felt so whole . . . Never have I been so aware of my weaknesses and vulnerability; yet never have I been so content and felt so strong ... Above all, I have become aware of the power of God's grace and my need for it. My soul has grown because it has been awakened to the goodness and love of

God. God has been present in my life these past three years. God will continue to be present to the end of my life and through all eternity. God is growing my soul, making it bigger and filling it with himself. My life is being transformed."

## **BLESSING THROUGH TRIALS**

***Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. Ps. 126:5***

***As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem. Isa. 66:13***

***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. Romans 8:28***

***You know the testing of your faith develops perseverance. James 1:3***

***No temptation/testing has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted/tested beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted/tested, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. 1 Cor. 10:13***

***He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield. Ps. 91:4***

***"Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble I will deliver him & honor him. With long life will I satisfy him & show him my salvation. Psalm 91:14-16***

## TRANSITION

What should be our attitude to suffering?

How should we respond to suffering?

When will suffering be gone?

## C. WHEN WILL SUFFERING BE GONE?

We've seen that God has not destroyed evil because He would have to destroy us. We have looked at some responses to evil and suffering. But there is another aspect to all this. There is another response. And that response is to LOOK AHEAD. You see, even though God won't **DESTROY** evil, He will ultimately **DEFEAT** evil. And what a glorious day that will be, amen? I've read the end of the book! Satan and his deceptions will be done away with forever, and we will no longer be at the mercy of a world gone mad, because we will be in the presence of God forever!

He has our best interests at heart. And He sees the bigger picture. There's the story of the man flying his plane above a mountain road. He looked down to see a car trying to pass a semi truck. However, the man in the car could not see around the truck to pass due to the dips and curves in the road. The pilot could see that there were no other vehicles in the area, and that the car would be in no danger in passing the truck. All he could do was sit up there and reflect on the fact that from his vantage point he could see what the man in the car could not see. Because he had a bigger picture. It is the same with God. He sees the BIG picture.

### *THE ONION*

*I was an onion before Christ set me free.*

*Layers upon layers of iniquity.*

*An ugly old onion whose fragrance was strong,*

*That my Jesus bought and loved all along.*

*Unknown to me what He was going to do.*

*Of what He was planning, I had not a clue.*

*Pulling each layer off one by one.  
In order to make me more like Jesus the Son.*

*The first layer wasn't so bad.  
I saw all the sins that I knew I had.  
They were easy to fix, just change the way I talk.  
And learn more of how He wanted me to walk.*

*Reading His Word, and learning again;  
How to put aside my life of sin.  
But the next layer was pulled would hurt more.  
He was getting closer to the core.  
Unknown what He would find there,  
I simply gave it to Him in prayer.*

*As another layer was removed, He started to cry.  
Pulling this layer brought pain to my Father on High.  
And I was crying over the sadness I felt;  
The brokenness and all of the guilt.  
Past memories that I thought were gone;  
But they were buried under layers disguised in a fragrance so strong.*

*As onions peel more and more,  
They put tears in our eyes as we get closer to the core.  
So my father wept over my pain,  
Giving me a balm of comfort and strength to sustain.*

*"NO MORE LAYERS" I would scream,  
As he continued to peel them off of me.  
"I'll have nothing left my Lord, what will I do?  
I'll be nothing but a worthless core to you."*

*But He just said "Trust me," and continued to peel.  
I was sure He was blind to my pain, which was so real.*

*Year after year I shrunk more and more;  
Until all that was left of this onion was a core.*

*It was then that I began to understand.  
As the Lord embraced me in His loving hand,  
He said, "Now and only now can you be  
The creation that will minister before me.*

*"Clothed with the righteousness only from above;  
Gone are your layers of self, so you can be filled with my love."  
He took my layers of sin, hurt and pain  
And clothed me with love, truth and mercy in His name.*

*Yes, we are all onions, learning with each day  
How to overcome as each layer is taken away.  
Some layers tear and pull at our heart  
While others grieve us to our innermost part.*

*But we are nothing but an ugly onion without Christ.  
Layers upon layers of pride, sin and strife.  
Only God can take those layers away  
And clothe us with His righteousness in that final day.*

## **CONCLUSION**

Groups, or whole-group discussion

Attitude to suffering

What tell Christian in third world country?

What tell teen whose parent's divorcing?

What tell teen with handicapped little brother/sister?