

Suffering in the Bible

Why Is There Suffering?

1. For doing wrong. Sin from yielding to temptation from the world, the sinful nature, and the devil.
2. For doing right. Persecution for your faith: "However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name" (1 Peter 4:16). For doing God's will: "So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good" (1 Peter 4:19).
3. For no apparent reason. Natural disasters, accidental deaths, deformities. This is the problem of seemingly pointless suffering and evil.

Three Questions Raised by Suffering and Evil:

1. Does He Know?
 - a. 1 Peter 4:12. "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trail you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you."
 - b. Acts 14:22. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom."
 - c. 2 Timothy 3:12. "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."
 - d. 1 Peter 5:9. "You know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings."
 - e. Matthew 5:11. "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me."
 - f. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible describes a great cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil that results in human suffering.
2. Does He Care?
 - a. 1 Peter 5:7. "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."
 - b. Matthew 10:29-31. A sparrow can't fall outside your Father's care. You are worth more than many sparrows.
 - c. John 16:33. "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."
 - d. Matthew 11:28. "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."
 - e. Matthew 5:12. "Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."
3. Can He Do Anything About It?
 - f. 1 Peter 5:10. "And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast."
 - g. Romans 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."
 - h. 2 Corinthians 12:9. His grace is sufficient. His power is made perfect in weakness

Purposes and Benefits for Suffering Mentioned in the Bible

1. For God's inscrutable reasons, as in the suffering of Job
2. Psalm 119:67,71. David said, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word. It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees."
3. So that the work of God may be displayed, as in the healing of the man born blind (John 9:3).
4. For God's glory that God's Son may be glorified, as in the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11:4).
5. So evil may be punished, as the Israelites being able to drive out the nations occupying Canaan (Deuteronomy 9:4-5).
6. So that our character may be developed, as in Romans 5:3-5. (cf., Daniel 11:35)
7. So that we may be delivered from bondage to decay and become children of God, as in Romans 8:20-21.
8. So that we may draw closer to God, as in 2 Corinthians 1:4.
9. So that we may be made more sensitive to others so that we can comfort them with the comfort we ourselves have received, as in 2 Corinthians 1:4 and Luke 22:31-33.
10. So that we will not rely upon ourselves but upon God, as in 2 Corinthians 1:9.
11. So that God may receive praise, as in 1 Peter 1:6-7.
12. When we suffer sin loses power, as in 1 Peter 4:1-2.
13. Romans 5:3-5. Our suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; character, a hope that doesn't disappoint.

Attitudes Toward Suffering Commended in the Bible

1. 1 Peter 4:1-2. Arm yourself with same attitude as Christ, because when sin loses power, you will live for the will of God.
2. 1 Peter 4:13. "Rejoice that you participate in the suffering of Christ."
3. 1 Thessalonians 5:16:18. Rejoicing always is God's will.
4. Philippians 1:29. It's a privilege to suffer for Christ
5. Philippians 3:10. We're invited to participate in the fellowship of His sufferings
6. James 1:2-3. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that testing of your faith develops perseverance."
7. Isaiah 55, 9-10. "My ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."
8. Deuteronomy 29:29. "The secret things belong to the LORD our God."
9. Romans 9:20. "But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? 'Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this.''"
10. Acts 5:41. "The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name."
11. 2 Corinthians 5:16-17. "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light & momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."