

Should we be angry at God because of pain and suffering?

By Kenneth W. Lent – June 2012

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Why does God allow suffering, especially by those who are innocent of any apparent wrong doing? The Bible tells us that God Almighty, is a loving God and that He is all powerful. If this is so, many ask “why then does He allow wars, horrific disease, periodic starvation, emotional destruction, financial ruin of decent folks, or children to be raped by a perverted maniac molester? Can’t He just reach down and stop all or at least some of the world’s agony? Or is He actually too weak to prevent all of this carnage, or is it that He just doesn’t care, or maybe He doesn’t even exist at all? “God” or “Yahweh” (from YHVH in Hebrew ‘to exist/breathe’) we are told, has brought all into existence, but didn’t He realize that we would have to exist in the pains of this world?

These things challenge the faith of the believer in God more than any other matter that he or she can be confronted with. Some feel: “Why does Yahweh just sit there like a giant laboratory scientist with his Nintendo video game and make all of the pain happen on planet Earth toward all of His little created beings running around helpless to stop the scientist’s cruel prodding and schemes of human suffering?”

All or most of us have wondered and even agonized over this problem at some time or another. What is the answer, and does the Bible have anything to say about all of this? This essay will attempt to at least breach the perimeter of this enormous circle of higher cause and purpose, in dealing with our finite mind’s incapability to know all the answer at this time. Hopefully the little we “discuss” here will help the reader to be comforted to a greater extent, concerning the problem of Christian Faith in God, in light of the misery we see around us.

The first idea we should stop from festering in our thoughts is that the world is completely bad and evil. This is incorrect. As much as we notice the evil, there is still much more good to living than there is bad. The primary and definitive proof of this is that people try to hang on to life as long as they can. Even though it may appear so to a certain aspect of our thinking, if life was a constant torture chamber of unending, non-enduring misery, people would be quite ready at the age of four or five to commit suicide, and they would do so. They don’t. Puppies, kittens, green trees,

bird songs, blue skies, family & friends, nature's many colors, breathing in and out, plus many more things we could list, still outweigh the evil perpetrated in the world. We may not have appreciated these things since they are not as shocking to our comprehension as a visible tragedy. Life is like a highway. Most cars don't get in a wreck, but the ones that do catch our attention.

Additionally, we all have some sort of inner or instinctive reckoning that "good" is a higher and more powerful order than "bad". So no matter what our misconception, there is still more good in the world than evil. Police officers don't have to arrest everybody in every store every day. They just arrest the occasional burglar when he breaks in to steal. If we keenly observe the many fine points of our daily life we will realize that this is true for the vast majority of people. It is the problems we don't like, thus they are magnified to our reasoning, and thus they bother us tremendously.

In trying to "figure out" the problem with suffering and why God allows it, we have to first settle and accept that it is God Almighty who created our minds and created the level of thoughts we possess. We can only use what He has given us, and only for the purposes He allows us. Where in the Bible does it say that God created our minds so that we may question His motives? Nowhere. It is simply beyond the capability of our mind to do so. We just are not equipped for that process. So for us to attempt to use our minds unlawfully for the purpose of questioning what God does or does not do, would be presumptuous on our part.

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25)

"Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, why hast Thou made me thus?" (Romans 9:20)

When we get it fixed in our understanding that Yahweh God is the Creator and that whatever He does is for the ultimate good no matter how distasteful to us, then we may move on to examine how it may be that suffering might have a spiritual benefit that our carnal mind may have not understood.

First of all we need to realize that the world today is under a curse caused by man and that God did not create the world in this manner.

“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;” (Gen.3:17)

Man was in rebellion against God and corrupted the environment. It was not God in rebellion against man. Because of this the entire world is affected:

*“Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from **the bondage of corruption** into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” (Romans 8:21,22)

And who has stepped forth to correct this mess? God Himself, as He has promised *"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain"* (Revelation 21:4)

Let's quit blaming God for something our family has done. Could God have stopped Adam and Eve (or us) from sinning? Yes – if we all want to be puppets on a string where God intervenes in every accident, every act of nature that may hurt us, every time someone may want to harm us, every hang nail that appears on our fingers, every illness, or any thing or circumstance at all that may cause adversity to the “nth” degree. If it was best that we should be non thinking beings who are no longer free moral agents who can make choices --- then by all means God would have seen to it that sin never entered into our character. But we made the choice to sin and we have caused the result.

Aha – but you say, “What about innocent infants, the mentally retarded, and paraplegics stuck in a wheel chair? They are totally innocent, so why doesn't God at least take care of them and protect them from misery?” Because from the high court of divine justice there is no such thing as “the suffering innocent”. We are all sinners who, by our nature would have fared no better than Adam and Eve had we been in the garden. Nobody is innocent. *"all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23) I'm sorry to sound insensitive (I'm not) but here is reality. This does not mean that “God is out ‘to get’ even crippled people”. It means that they too are under the curse we have caused. The hopelessly infirmed, upon their

healing, would become sinners by choice as soon as they were able to do so. The Bible teaches this, and normal experience has proven it. Over the course of time, man sins when given the opportunity.

The only person who was truly innocent was Jesus Christ, and the fact which we need to understand is that this singularly innocent person suffered more than any person who has ever lived. On the cross He not only endured the physical pain of crucifixion, He took upon Him all the sins of the entire race of man and carried that infinitely painful burden into His death. Why did He do this? To remove the curse upon us and the planet we caused to happen. Do we dare say that God doesn't care? Think again dear Christian, and try to get a glimpse of God's perspective on things. He cares more than we will ever know.

“But this all seems so unfair” “Why can't God just be fair?” Here is what Paul the Apostle has to say about so called fairness.

“What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

*For He saith to Moses, **I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.***

So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.” (Romans 9: 14-18)

Do you think Pharaoh thought it was “fair” that all his men died in the sea? He must have thought it totally unfair that life dealt that blow to His army after his nation had been struck with all sorts of miserable plagues and they all lost their first born. But what was “unfair suffering” to Egypt became joyful blessings to Israel as they escaped death and set up their nation. There is not always an immediate or clear answer as to why some people must suffer, but there always is a purpose to it which God alone fully knows. Paul's explanation on suffering is that we must accept that God in His wisdom is just and merciful, and that our thoughts cannot comprehend His

majestic reasons for what He does. God allows suffering because He is God and He knows what He is doing. Paul says that our reasoning is not up to the task of figuring out all of God's plans.

"Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!" (Romans 11:33)

Thus, the mature believer knows that Yahweh God is wise and merciful wanting us to wind up in His love when all is said and done. In the mean time "during the here and now" He allows trials and sufferings to come in our lives.

"For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

For instance, if we don't move in God's direction when He clearly calls us according to His written Word, suffering and pain can be a powerful tool to get us moving where we need to be. The unrepentant person may be led of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Yahweh deals with that individual in hardships to lead him to conversion. For the Christian, misery and suffering can be the method that God uses to prod the person into a closer relation with Him and to build a stronger character from realizing the fruit gained in enduring hardship.

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Hebrews 12:11)

Considering all of these things we have touched on in this short essay, do we really have a right to challenge God as to why He permits suffering? Today in America we have serious problems with people that do things they have no right to do. We question the right of unlawful government to act beyond their listed powers. We ask whether illegal aliens have a right to many benefits they are exacting from America. We become upset when convicted felons demand rights to be free only to see them commit crimes again. But we fail to see that when it comes down to us asking God *why do you allow suffering upon me or others?*, we as men actually have no right to do so. In this we are out of line and out of order. Paul tells us that we have no such right to ask the question "why?": *"Nay but, O man, who art thou*

that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” (Rom. 9:20)

We should further know that God is not a distributor of suffering for His own enjoyment, but only for the purpose of our own eventual good. As our Heavenly Father, God much dislikes seeing men in pain. He only allows it because men have been stubborn and have not graciously reacted to His opened arms. Jeremiah the prophet, who saw much suffering of the nation, knew all about this issue and had this to write:

“For Yahweh will not cast off for ever:

But though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies.

For He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.

To crush under His feet all the prisoners of the earth,

To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High,

To subvert a man in his cause, Yahweh approveth not.” (Lamentations 3:31-36)

Therefore, to ask “*why* all the suffering” is focusing on things we can’t change but have happened by the greater design of God. Instead, our Heavenly Father calls us to remedy our mental and emotional struggles with this perceived problem of misery, by asking “what is the purpose of my life in constant learning, and what future awaits the world as we travel through the process of His redemption and correction of what we have messed up in the first place?” Let us become aware of what Yahweh told Paul in Paul’s suffering: “*And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*” (2 Corinthians 12:9)

He will perfect us and perfect the world in due time. Suffering may or may not be relieved in our lives or our friends’ lives. But strength will be given to make it through. Ask for the strength in Christ. You will be empowered to make it through. “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*” (Philippians 4:13) Trust Him. We caused the curse. He’s fixing it.