

Why Does A Loving God Allow Suffering In The World?

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Why does God allow suffering, even for His own children? This question is as old as the first tear, and as recent as the latest tragedy. Opponents of God ask why a loving God would allow suffering, sorrow, heartache, and death. Sometimes, His own children wonder the same thing. In fact, this question has been asked at some time by every thinking person who contemplates or believes in the existence of God. It is a valid question. Following are some thoughts that should be helpful in dealing with this very difficult question.

First, suffering keeps this world from becoming too attractive to us. If there was no suffering, who would want to leave this world for the far better eternal one? Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (1 John 2:15)

Second, the best comes out in others when someone suffers. In times of disaster, people rally to aid the one(s) suffering injury, heartbreak, natural disaster, accident, or serious illness. ...in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. (2 Corinthians 8:1-2)

Third, suffering gives us occasion to silence the enemies of God. Satan wanted to prove that God was wrong about Job. Satan said that Job served God only because God had blessed him with earthly joy and gain. But when he lost it all, Job's steadfast perseverance (patience) showed Satan that true worshippers see beyond present circumstance and still glorify God and give thanks. Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshipped. And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God. (Job 1:20-22)

Fourth, suffering makes us appreciate the good times. It keeps us from clinging to worldly things so tightly. We receive so many good things in our lives that we become prone to taking them for granted instead of appreciating them properly and giving thanks to God for them. Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow. (James 1:17)

Fifth, suffering makes us sympathetic to and compassionate toward others who are suffering. There is nobody who can comfort like one who has experienced something himself. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:5)

Sixth, suffering is an answer to God's calling. It makes us like Christ, who is our example. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps... (1 Peter 2:21)

Finally, and most importantly, suffering makes us realize our need for God. In good times, we tend to forget about God and think ourselves to be self-sufficient. In times of loss and suffering, an honest and good heart will turn to God for deliverance. Scripture teaches that God hears the prayers of a sincere heart, whereas a hardened heart will choose to reject God at such times. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you. (1 Peter 5:6-7)

When you suffer, remember, Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4)

Why, you ask again, would God allow human suffering? I propose to let Him answer. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9)

Sharing the suffering in Christ,

Bill Elliott