

7/26/99 - pm  
Grenada, MS

## ***When God's Word Doesn't Seem to Make Sense Joy Amidst Trials***

**Intro:** Suffering, in one form or another, is never very far away.

1. A Christian recently remarked: "My wife is terminally ill, my son got divorced, my daughter converted to Catholicism and I lost my job. What else can happen?!"
2. Is he unusual? No, these things are snapshots from the album of daily life.
3. Checks bounce, microbes invade, wasps sting, plumbing leaks, tires go flat, the IRS audits, people argue, hairdos fall, stock drops, bunions throb, teeth rot, teams lose, weeds grow, rain falls, paint peels, milk spills, etc., etc. *ad infinitum*.

### **1. The Problems of Suffering**

A. Suffering creates a "ripple effect" of related problems.

1. It HURTS! Suffering brings great physical and emotional pain.
2. Creates uncertainty, insecurity. Suffering is often the result of a random event. We feel vulnerable. Will it happen again?
3. Suggests fault, blame. **Ex:** Woman llost child, Christian told her God was punishing her. But suffering is often the result of random event – Ecc 9:2, 11.

B. The question of "Why?"

1. Asked by godly men: Job 3:11-12, 16, 20, 25; Jer 12:1-2; Hab 1:13-14.
2. Not all "whys" are answered in the Scriptures: Why does God allow harmful elements to exist in our environment? Why does Satan exist? Why do random events occur if God is in control? Why do innocent people suffer?
3. Most important "whys," those that immediately affect salvation, are answered.

C. Suffering brings God's existence/goodness into question.

1. God may be all powerful but not good; all good but not powerful.
2. We must reason from what we know about God to our circumstances.
3. **But there is a point at which "why" becomes moot; we must accept what is and how we will choose to respond to it.**

## 2. God and Suffering

A. God has given us much resource to prevent and alleviate suffering:

1. Moral laws, if followed, would solve **most** of the world's problems – Mt 7:12.
2. Civil government which punishes those who cause suffering – Rom 13:1, 4.
3. Intelligence and freedom to manipulate environment to alleviate suffering: medical advancements, agricultural improvements, etc.

B. God enables suffering to be a strengthening agent – **Rom 5:3-4**; Jas 1:2-4; 1 Pet 2:19- 20; 3:13-14; 4:15-16, 19; 5:10. Suffering reminds us of our frailty, focuses our minds on spiritual things, renews our dependence upon God, deflates our ego. Our **attitude** will determine whether our character is **ennobled** or **eroded** by it.

C. God's participation in our suffering. God could not just say "I understand." God, in essence said, *"If you have to endure it, then I will endure it with you."* In Jesus God becomes personally familiar with suffering and death - Heb 2:10-18.

D. God will recompense all at the final judgment – Rom 2:5-11.

E. God's sovereignty as demonstrated to Job:

1. Job's struggle with God's fairness - Job 19:6-11; 23:1-7. From the depths of his suffering Job only sees God's severity, injustice. He wishes to argue his case.
2. God does **not** explain the background of what has befallen Job; He ignores the circumstance and focuses upon His sovereign power and wisdom:
  - a. Jb 38-39 - God created all things by order, design. Who is man to criticize?
  - b. Jb 40-41 - God controls all. Man cannot even control wild beasts.
  - c. When directly challenged by God Job acknowledges God's greatness - Jb 42:1-6. Even from the pain and anguish of our suffering we have no right to fault God for His decisions on what He allows to happen.
3. In order to charge God with wrongdoing we must know everything He knows and affirm that we can make a better judgment than Him. This from people who can't balance checkbooks, arrive on time or buy a new car w/o overpaying.

**Conclusion:** We must learn to **trust** God. There is abundant evidence that *"I will never leave you nor forsake you"* (Heb 13:5) and *"the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"* (Rom 8:18).