



KYLE LAURIANO

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# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND SUFFERING

*Real Testimonies. Radical Transformations.*

KYLE LAURIANO MINISTRY



# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND SUFFERING

# A COMPREHENSIVE PHILOSOPHICAL, THEOLOGICAL, PASTORAL, AND PRACTICAL EXAMINATION OF WHY A GOOD GOD ALLOWS SUFFERING

A Complete 30,000+ Word Resource

*For struggling believers, skeptics, philosophers, and anyone  
wrestling with pain, loss, and the existence of God*

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM THAT HAUNTS US

### PART 1: UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

- The Classical Formulation
- Types of Evil
- The Emotional vs. The Intellectual
- Why This Problem Matters

### PART 2: PHILOSOPHICAL THEODICIES

- The Free Will Defense
- The Soul-Making Theodicy
- The Divine Hiddenness Argument
- The Greater Good Defense
- Skeptical Theism
- The Openness of God

### PART 3: THEOLOGICAL RESPONSES

- God's Character and Nature
- Providence and Predestination
- The Problem of Innocent Suffering
- God's Relationship to Evil
- Biblical Laments and Honest Questions
- The Problem of Animal Suffering

## **PART 4: THE CROSS AS RESPONSE**

- God Entering Suffering
- Jesus's Experience of Pain and Abandonment
- Substitutionary Atonement and Redemptive Suffering
- The Resurrection as Victory Over Evil
- The Cross as Model for Understanding Suffering

## **PART 5: BIBLICAL APPROACHES TO SUFFERING**

- The Book of Job: Questioning God
- Laments in the Psalms
- Paul's Thorn in the Flesh
- Peter's Teaching on Suffering
- Revelation's Perspective on Suffering

## **PART 6: TYPES OF SUFFERING AND SPECIFIC RESPONSES**

- Suffering from Sin and Wrongdoing
- Suffering from Natural Causes
- Suffering from Injustice
- Suffering from Loss and Grief
- Suffering from Illness and Disease
- Suffering from Mental Anguish
- Suffering from Persecution

## **PART 7: SPIRITUAL GROWTH THROUGH SUFFERING**

- Suffering as Teacher

- Character Development Through Hardship
- Compassion Born from Pain
- Faith Deepened Through Trial
- Hope Refined Through Adversity
- Perseverance Developed Through Endurance

## **PART 8: PRACTICAL RESPONSE TO SUFFERING**

- What to Do When Faith Fails
- Prayer in the Darkness
- Community and Support in Suffering
- Care for the Grieving and Hurting
- Meaning-Making in Suffering
- Finding Purpose in Pain

## **PART 9: THE ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE**

- God's Promise of Restoration
- The New Heaven and New Earth
- Ultimate Justice and Resolution
- Resurrection and Hope
- The Promise Beyond This Life
- From Suffering to Glory

## **PART 10: ADDRESSING SPECIFIC OBJECTIONS**

- The Problem of Animal Suffering
- The Problem of Innocent Children Suffering
- The Problem of Excessive Suffering

- The Problem of Divine Hiddenness
- The Problem of Unanswered Prayer
- The Problem of Randomness in Suffering

#### **CONCLUSION: FAITH IN THE DARKNESS**

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# INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM THAT HAUNTS US

There is a question that strikes at the heart of Christian faith, that causes the most faithful to doubt, that sends the skeptical into confident denial: If God is all-powerful, why doesn't God stop suffering? If God is all-good, why doesn't God prevent pain? If both are true, how can suffering exist?

This is the problem of evil and suffering. It is, arguably, the greatest intellectual challenge to faith. It is also, perhaps, the most emotionally powerful objection. When a child dies of cancer, when a woman is assaulted, when an earthquake kills thousands, intellectual arguments about God's nature seem hollow and inadequate.

Yet this problem also drives us to deeper faith. The person who has never wrestled with why God allows suffering has perhaps not truly thought about their faith. The person who has suffered deeply and maintained faith has discovered something profound about the nature of trust and relationship with God.

This resource addresses the problem of evil and suffering from multiple angles:

- **Philosophically** - examining logical arguments and counter-arguments
- **Theologically** - exploring what Scripture and Christian tradition teach
- **Pastorally** - considering how to help those in pain

- **Practically** - addressing concrete steps for living with suffering

## WHY THIS PROBLEM MATTERS

The problem of evil is not an abstract philosophical puzzle. It is deeply personal.

**A child born with severe disease that causes lifelong pain.** Why would a loving God allow this?

**A brutal injustice where the perpetrator escapes consequences while the victim suffers lasting trauma.** Where is God's justice?

**The death of a loved one at the height of life's promise.** Why does God allow this?

**Chronic illness that leads to isolation and despair.** Why doesn't God heal?

**Systemic injustice that crushes the vulnerable and oppressed.** Where is God's power?

These are not theoretical questions. They are the deepest questions of the human heart.

## THE SCOPE OF SUFFERING

To understand the problem of evil, we must acknowledge the scope of suffering in our world:

- Over 8 million people die annually from cancer
- Over 1 million people die annually from tuberculosis
- Over 800,000 people die annually from suicide

- Over 260 million children are out of school
- Over 750 million people live in extreme poverty
- Wars and conflicts displace millions
- Natural disasters kill thousands annually
- Accidents kill over 3 million people annually

Beyond statistics, suffering is individual and profound. Each number represents a person—a life, relationships, hopes, dreams interrupted or ended.

## THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION

The problem of evil is particularly acute for religious believers because:

1. **God is defined as all-powerful** - capable of preventing any suffering
2. **God is defined as all-good** - desiring to prevent suffering
3. **God is defined as omniscient** - knowing about all suffering
4. **Yet suffering persists** - apparently contrary to what these definitions suggest

For non-believers, suffering is tragic but not paradoxical. The universe is indifferent. Pain happens because the world operates through impersonal physical processes.

But for believers, suffering raises a logical problem: How can these claims about God all be true while suffering is real and widespread?

# OUR APPROACH

This resource will:

1. **Articulate the problem clearly** - understanding what we're actually asking
2. **Examine philosophical responses** - exploring various theodicies and defenses
3. **Consider theological teaching** - what Scripture and tradition say
4. **Center Christ** - understanding how the cross addresses suffering
5. **Acknowledge pastoral reality** - that arguments alone don't comfort
6. **Offer practical wisdom** - for living faithfully through suffering
7. **Maintain biblical hope** - the promise of ultimate restoration

We will not pretend that intellectual arguments answer all emotional pain. We will not claim that every question has a satisfying answer. But we will explore resources—philosophical, theological, spiritual, and practical—for maintaining faith in a world of suffering.

**Romans 5:3-4 (KJV):**

*"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope."*

Paul teaches that suffering, when endured faithfully, produces spiritual growth. This does not mean suffering is good. But it means suffering can be transformed into something redemptive.

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# PART 1: UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

## THE CLASSICAL FORMULATION

The problem of evil is most concisely stated as a logical puzzle:

**Premise 1:** If God is omnipotent (all-powerful), God can prevent all suffering.

**Premise 2:** If God is benevolent (all-good), God wants to prevent all suffering.

**Premise 3:** Suffering exists in the world.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, either God is not omnipotent, or God is not benevolent, or God does not exist.

This formulation, credited to the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus, is often stated as:

*"Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?"*

This is a logical problem. It claims that certain statements cannot all be true simultaneously.

## THE LOGICAL STRUCTURE

To understand the problem more deeply, let's examine the logical structure:

**Statement A:** God is omnipotent (all-powerful).

**Statement B:** God is omniscient (all-knowing).

**Statement C:** God is omnibenevolent (all-good).

**Statement D:** Evil and suffering exist.

The problem is that these four statements seem contradictory.

How can all four be true?

**If God is omnipotent (A):** God has the power to prevent suffering.

There are no limits to God's power.

**If God is omniscient (B):** God knows about all suffering. Nothing

escapes God's awareness.

**If God is omnibenevolent (C):** God desires to prevent suffering.

God's character is completely good.

**Yet suffering exists (D):** Despite God's power, knowledge, and

goodness, suffering persists.

This seems paradoxical.

## TYPES OF EVIL

To address this problem, we must distinguish between types of evil or suffering.

**Moral Evil** Moral evil is suffering caused by human choice. This includes:

- Murder
- Rape
- Torture
- Theft
- Deception
- War

Moral evil results from people choosing to harm others. It violates God's moral law and God's design for human relationships.

**Natural Evil** Natural evil is suffering caused by natural processes. This includes:

- Disease
- Aging
- Natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, hurricanes)
- Accidents
- Predation in nature
- Death itself

Natural evil is not caused by human choice but results from living in a physical world with consistent natural laws.

**Metaphysical Evil** Some theologians identify a third category: metaphysical evil. This refers to the finitude and limitations inherent in created existence.

Humans are not God. We are limited in:

- Knowledge
- Power

- Goodness
- Duration (we die)
- Perspective (we see only part of reality)

These limitations are not moral failures but inherent to being created (non-divine).

## THE EMOTIONAL VS. THE INTELLECTUAL PROBLEM

It is crucial to distinguish between two aspects of the problem of evil:

**The Intellectual Problem** This is the logical problem we've been discussing. It is about whether the statements about God (omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent) can be reconciled with the existence of suffering. This problem is addressed through philosophy and theology.

**The Emotional Problem** This is the problem of actually experiencing suffering. When a person is in pain, losing a loved one, or witnessing injustice, intellectual arguments seem inadequate or offensive. The emotional problem asks: "Where is God? Why is this happening to me? How can I trust God?"

The emotional problem is addressed through:

- Pastoral care
- Community support
- Personal encounter with God
- Spiritual discipline
- Time and healing

It is crucial not to conflate these problems. Solving the intellectual problem does not solve the emotional problem. Conversely, a deep spiritual experience may help someone live with suffering even if they haven't intellectually solved the logical puzzle.

## WHY THIS PROBLEM MATTERS

The problem of evil is not merely academic. It affects how people understand God, how they approach faith, and how they respond to suffering.

**For believers:** The problem of evil can shake faith. A Christian who has always believed in God's goodness may find that belief severely tested when tragedy strikes. Wrestling with evil and suffering can lead to deeper faith or to abandonment of faith.

**For skeptics:** The problem of evil is often cited as the primary reason for disbelief. "If God exists and is good, why is there suffering?" This question leads many to conclude that either God doesn't exist or isn't good.

**For those suffering:** The experience of suffering raises urgent practical and spiritual questions. How should one respond to suffering? What meaning can suffering have? How can one maintain faith while suffering?

**For theology:** How we understand suffering affects how we understand God's nature, God's relationship to creation, human freedom, and ultimate meaning.

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## THE VARIETIES OF SUFFERING

To adequately address the problem of evil, we must recognize that suffering is not monolithic. Different types of suffering raise different questions and may require different responses.

**Suffering We Cause Others** When someone suffers because of another person's harmful actions, this raises questions about:

- Why God gives humans the freedom to harm each other
- Why God doesn't intervene to prevent all harm
- How God's justice addresses wrongs

**Suffering We Cause Ourselves** When someone suffers as a result of their own unwise or sinful choices, this raises questions about:

- God's response to human folly
- Whether suffering is deserved or redemptive
- How God works with human consequences

**Suffering from Natural Causes** When someone suffers from disease, aging, accident, or natural disaster, this raises questions about:

- Why God created a world with these dangers
- Whether natural processes should be seen as God's will
- How God sustains people through unavoidable suffering

**Suffering from Injustice** When someone suffers because of systemic injustice, corruption, or the oppression of others, this raises questions about:

- Why God permits injustice
- When God's justice will be manifest
- How God's kingdom opposes systemic evil

**Suffering from Loss** When someone experiences grief through death, separation, or loss of hopes, this raises questions about:

- Why God allows profound loss
- Whether death is natural or an enemy
- How to find meaning after loss

**Suffering from Mental Anguish** When someone experiences depression, anxiety, trauma, or spiritual despair, this raises questions about:

- The reality and validity of psychological pain
- God's response to mental suffering
- Healing and recovery

Each type of suffering requires thought and response, and different types raise somewhat different questions about evil.

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## PART 2: PHILOSOPHICAL THEODICIES

A theodicy is an attempt to justify God's goodness and power in light of evil. The term comes from Leibniz and combines "theo" (God) and "dike" (justice). Theodicies attempt to show that God is just despite the existence of evil.

Various philosophical responses to the problem of evil have been developed throughout history. Let's examine the major ones.

### THE FREE WILL DEFENSE

The most influential response to the problem of evil is the free will defense. This response addresses specifically the problem of moral evil.

#### **The Argument**

God created humans with genuine freedom. Freedom means the ability to choose between alternatives. A person with genuine freedom can choose to do good or evil.

True freedom necessarily includes the possibility of choosing wrongly. You cannot give someone genuine freedom and guarantee they will always choose rightly.

God could have created a world where everyone always chose rightly. But that world would not contain genuine freedom—it would be a world where people are programmed or compelled to be good.

God chose instead to create a world with genuine freedom, which means genuine possibility of evil. God did not cause the evil, but God permitted it as the necessary corollary of freedom.

### **Why God Could Not Do Better**

Some ask: "Why couldn't God create a world where people have freedom but never choose to do evil?"

This question points to a logical impossibility. If a person is free, they can choose to do evil. If they cannot choose to do evil, they lack freedom.

This is not a limitation on God's power. It is a logical truth. God cannot do logically impossible things. God cannot create round squares or make  $2+2=5$ . Similarly, God cannot create genuinely free creatures who are guaranteed never to choose wrongly.

### **Why This Matters**

This defense explains moral evil through human choice. When people murder, assault, steal, or lie, these actions are human choices, not God's actions.

#### **Romans 6:23 (KJV):**

*"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Sin is presented as something humans choose. It has consequences, but these consequences follow from human choice.

### **Why This Defense is Limited**

The free will defense addresses moral evil (suffering caused by human choice) but does not address natural evil (suffering from disease, disaster, aging).

A person born with a genetic disease has not chosen to suffer. Natural disaster victims have not chosen to suffer. These sufferings are not the result of anyone's free choice to do evil. So the free will defense does not explain them.

## THE SOUL-MAKING THEODICY

The soul-making theodicy, developed by Irenaeus and later by John Hick, proposes that suffering serves a purpose in human spiritual development.

### **The Argument**

God's purpose is not just to create humans but to create humans of a certain character—compassionate, courageous, patient, faithful. These virtues cannot develop without challenge.

Courage requires the possibility of fear. You cannot develop courage in a world where nothing is dangerous.

Patience requires difficulty. You cannot develop patience when everything is easy.

Compassion requires the ability to suffer with others. You cannot have compassion if you've never experienced pain or never encountered others in pain.

Forgiveness requires wrongdoing. You cannot forgive in a world where no one wrongs anyone.

God created a world with challenge, difficulty, and suffering because such a world is necessary for the development of virtue and character.

### **Supporting Scriptures**

#### **Romans 5:3-4 (KJV):**

*"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope."*

Paul teaches that suffering produces spiritual growth—patience, experience, and hope.

#### **James 1:2-4 (KJV):**

*"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."*

James teaches that trials strengthen faith and character.

#### **1 Peter 1:6-7 (KJV):**

*"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."*

Peter teaches that trials test and strengthen faith.

### **Why This Defense is Limited**

While suffering can produce growth, not all suffering does so. Some suffering produces bitterness, despair, and spiritual death rather than growth.

Also, this defense seems to suggest that suffering is justified by its benefits. But this can seem cruel. Does a starving child in Africa need the suffering to develop patience? Would a less painful path to virtue have been possible?

## **THE DIVINE HIDDENNESS ARGUMENT**

This response focuses not on why God permits suffering but on why God is not more obviously present.

### **The Argument**

For faith to be meaningful, God must be somewhat hidden. If God appeared visibly, performing miracles constantly, revealing himself undeniably—then belief would not be faith. It would be forced assent to obvious truth.

Faith requires freedom. And freedom requires that God not be so obviously present that belief becomes coerced.

By being somewhat hidden, God preserves human freedom. We can choose to seek God or to reject God. We can choose to trust despite doubt.

This hiddenness is related to suffering. In a world where God was constantly intervening to prevent suffering, God's presence would be undeniable. But then faith would be impossible.

### **Supporting Scriptures**

#### **Hebrews 11:1 (KJV):**

*"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."*

Faith is belief in things not seen. If God were constantly visible, faith would not be necessary.

#### **Hebrews 11:6 (KJV):**

*"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."*

God requires faith. This is possible only if God is not overwhelmingly obvious.

#### **Romans 10:17 (KJV):**

*"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*

Faith comes through God's word, not through undeniable visible demonstration.

### **Why This Defense is Limited**

If God's hiddenness is necessary for freedom, why does God reveal himself in Scripture and through Jesus? Why allow some miracles but not others?

Also, the hiddenness argument doesn't fully explain suffering. Even if we grant that God must be somewhat hidden, this doesn't explain extreme suffering, innocent suffering, or suffering that seems to serve no purpose.

## **THE GREATER GOOD DEFENSE**

This defense proposes that there is a greater good that justifies the permission of suffering, even though we may not understand what that greater good is.

### **The Argument**

God, with infinite wisdom and knowledge, sees the entire scope of history—past, present, and future. God sees how events interconnect and how suffering can ultimately lead to greater goods we cannot perceive.

A parent might allow a child to experience the pain of a vaccination because the parent knows vaccination prevents greater suffering. The child doesn't understand the greater good, but the parent does.

Similarly, God may allow suffering that serves greater purposes we cannot yet see. God's wisdom is infinitely greater than ours.

### **Supporting Scriptures**

#### **Isaiah 55:8-9 (KJV):**

*"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith 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."*

God's thoughts and ways are higher than ours.

#### **Romans 8:28 (KJV):**

*"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."*

God causes all things to work together for good.

#### **Romans 11:33-36 (KJV):**

*"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!  
how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!  
For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his  
counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be  
recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to  
him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."*

Paul emphasizes God's incomprehensible wisdom.

### **Why This Defense is Limited**

This defense relies on our trust in God's wisdom despite our inability to see the purpose. But this seems inadequate when facing extreme suffering.

Also, the defense is vague. What greater good could possibly justify the torture of a child? What purpose could justify the Holocaust? Without specifics, the "greater good" can seem like an evasion.

## **SKEPTICAL THEISM**

Skeptical theism is a more recent philosophical response. It focuses on the limits of human knowledge.

### **The Argument**

We are severely limited in our ability to discern God's reasons for permitting suffering. We have:

- Limited knowledge of future consequences
- Limited understanding of spiritual realities

- Limited perspective on how events interconnect
- Limited moral wisdom

Given these limitations, we cannot conclude that God has no good reason for permitting suffering, even if we cannot see what that reason is.

An analogy: A five-year-old child lacks the knowledge to understand why parents allow the child to experience pain (vaccinations, dental work, discipline). The child might conclude parents are cruel. But the child's limited knowledge prevents accurate judgment.

Similarly, our limited knowledge prevents us from concluding that God lacks good reasons for permitting suffering, even if we cannot discern those reasons.

### **Why This Defense is Attractive**

Skeptical theism honestly acknowledges the limits of human knowledge. It doesn't pretend we have answers we don't have. It maintains faith in God's goodness while admitting we don't understand everything.

### **Why This Defense is Limited**

Skeptical theism can seem like an evasion—a refusal to attempt any answer to the problem. If we can never know God's reasons, then appeals to faith become unfalsifiable. The defense becomes immune to critique because it makes no specific claims.

Also, some suffering seems almost gratuitously excessive. It's hard to maintain that we simply don't understand God's reasons when facing the worst suffering imaginable.

# THE OPENNESS OF GOD

This is a more recent theological development that challenges traditional views of omniscience.

## **The Argument**

Traditional theology teaches that God knows the future exhaustively—God knows exactly what will happen. But this seems incompatible with genuine human freedom.

If God knows in advance that you will choose X, then it seems your choice is not genuinely free—it's determined by what God knows.

Some theologians (called "open theists") propose that God knows all possibilities but not all actualities. God knows what might happen but not what will happen, because the future is not yet determined.

This view suggests that God does not prevent suffering because God does not know in advance that specific suffering will occur. But God responds to suffering and works to redeem it.

## **Why This View is Attractive**

It preserves genuine human freedom—our choices are not predetermined by God's foreknowledge. It also explains why God doesn't prevent all suffering—God doesn't have exhaustive foreknowledge of future suffering.

## **Why This View is Controversial**

It challenges traditional Christian teaching about God's omniscience. It seems to limit God's knowledge in ways that contradict Scripture's testimony to God's complete knowledge.



## PART 3: THEOLOGICAL RESPONSES

Beyond philosophical defenses, theology offers perspective on suffering grounded in Scripture and Christian tradition.

### GOD'S CHARACTER AND NATURE

A fundamental Christian conviction is that God is good. Not just good in our terms, but absolutely, essentially good.

**1 John 4:8 (KJV):**

*"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."*

God's essential nature is love. This is not sentimental or weak love but love that is also just, holy, and firm.

**Psalm 25:8 (KJV):**

*"Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way."*

God is good. This is foundational.

**But What Does "Good" Mean?**

Here's a crucial theological point: God's goodness is not necessarily what we understand by "good."

We tend to define good in terms of comfort, pleasure, and the absence of pain. A good parent, in our understanding, is one who prevents children from ever experiencing discomfort.

But Christian theology has traditionally understood goodness differently. God's goodness is complex and sometimes includes:

**Holiness and Justice** God's goodness includes justice—righting wrongs, holding people accountable, and punishing evil. A God who never held anyone accountable would not be perfectly good; such a God would lack justice.

**Toughness and Discipline** God's goodness includes discipline. A parent who never disciplines a child, who gives the child everything without any consequences for wrongdoing, is not being good—the parent is enabling the child's destruction.

**Hebrews 12:5-11 (KJV):**

*"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. 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."*

The author of Hebrews connects God's love with God's discipline. God disciplines those God loves—precisely because God loves them.

**Teaching and Growth** God's goodness includes desiring human growth and development. A parent who prevents a child from ever struggling, from ever facing challenges, is not being good. The child would never develop strength, wisdom, or character.

**Respect for Human Freedom** God's goodness includes respecting human autonomy and freedom. A God who controlled human beings, who made all decisions for us, would be manipulative, not good. True goodness respects the dignity of free creatures.

**Mystery and Limits to Human Understanding** God's goodness is ultimately mysterious. It exceeds our complete understanding. We see part of God's goodness but not all of it. We trust that what we don't understand serves God's good purposes.

## PROVIDENCE AND PREDESTINATION

Christian theology speaks of God's providence—God's active guidance of history and creation toward God's purposes. But this raises questions about how much God controls events.

### Theological Perspectives

Different Christian traditions understand God's control differently.

**Calvinist Perspective** Some Reformed theologians teach that God predestines all things. Nothing happens outside God's will. God's purposes include all events, including evil.

This raises the question: If God predestines evil, is God responsible for evil? Most Calvinist theologians respond that God permits evil through creatures' choices while maintaining overall providential control—a tension that remains somewhat mysterious.

**Arminian Perspective** Other theologians teach that God foreknows but does not predestine all events. God knows what will happen but does not cause it to happen. Human freedom is genuine.

This preserves human responsibility for choices but raises the question: If God foreknows evil and could prevent it, why doesn't God?

**Middle Ground** Many theologians hold a middle position: God exercises providential control while respecting human freedom. The exact mechanics remain somewhat mysterious, but the

conviction is that both are true—God is sovereign and humans are free.

### **What's Clear**

What all Christian perspectives agree on:

- God is ultimately in control
- God's purposes will be accomplished
- Human choices matter and have consequences
- God will bring justice and restoration
- We can trust God despite not understanding everything

## **THE PROBLEM OF INNOCENT SUFFERING**

One of the most difficult questions is why the innocent suffer. If suffering comes as a consequence of sin, why do children born into poverty suffer? Why do innocent people experience disease, disaster, and injustice?

### **Scripture's Acknowledgment**

Scripture does not shy away from this question. The Book of Job is entirely devoted to the problem of innocent suffering.

### **Job's Situation**

Job was righteous. He kept God's law, lived ethically, and honored God. Yet he experienced catastrophic suffering:

- His children were killed
- His wealth was destroyed

- His health was devastated
- He lost everything

Job's friends suggested that his suffering was punishment for sin. But the book's prologue tells us Job was innocent. His suffering was not deserved.

### **Job's Response**

Job demanded that God explain the suffering:

#### **Job 23:3-5 (KJV):**

*"Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me."*

Job was not content with platitudes. Job wanted God to engage with his suffering directly.

### **God's Response**

Remarkably, God did respond to Job. But God did not explain why Job suffered. Instead, God asked Job questions that expanded Job's perspective:

#### **Job 38:1-5 (KJV):**

*"Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man: for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?"*

God asks Job about the scope and complexity of creation. God is essentially saying: "Job, you don't understand the full scope of reality. Your perspective is limited. I see what you don't see."

### **Job's Resolution**

After encountering God, Job did not have intellectual answers to his suffering. But Job had something more important—he had a relationship with God.

### **Job 42:5-6 (KJV):**

*"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."*

Job's complaint was not that his suffering was unjust—but that his perspective was limited. When Job encountered God, his perspective shifted. Job saw that God was trustworthy despite Job's lack of understanding.

### **The Key Insight**

The Book of Job does not promise that we will understand all suffering. It promises that we can encounter God in our suffering, and that encounter is more valuable than complete intellectual understanding.

## GOD'S RELATIONSHIP TO EVIL

An important theological distinction is between God's will and God's permission.

### God's Will

God actively wills some things. God wills creation, redemption, justice, mercy, and love. God's will is good.

### God's Permission

God permits some things that God does not actively will. God permits human sin, though God does not will sin. God permits suffering, though God does not desire suffering.

Why does God permit what God does not will? Because:

1. **Human freedom requires it** - If God prevented all wrongdoing, human freedom would be eliminated
2. **Soul-making requires it** - If God prevented all suffering, spiritual growth would be impossible
3. **Redemptive purposes require it** - God can use even evil and suffering toward redemptive ends

**Important:** Permitting something is not the same as willing it or approving of it. A parent might permit a teenager to make a mistake, knowing the teenager will learn from the mistake. The parent does not will the mistake or approve of it, but permits it for the sake of growth and freedom.

## BIBLICAL LAMENTS AND HONEST QUESTIONS

Christianity honors the reality of suffering through the Psalms of lament. These are prayers in which believers cry out to God about suffering.

### Psalm 13 (KJV):

*"How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? Consider and hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death; Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved. But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation."*

The psalmist cries out: "How long will you forget me? How long will you hide your face?" This is honest, direct complaint to God. It is not disrespectful but truthful.

### Psalm 22 (KJV):

*"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent."*

Again, honest complaint. "My God, why have you forsaken me? I cry, but you don't answer."

### Psalm 42 (KJV):

*"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday."*

The psalmist is grieving, asking where God is, but continuing to seek God.

### The Pattern in Laments

The Psalms of lament typically follow a pattern:

1. **Complaint** - The psalmist describes the suffering and asks why
2. **Petition** - The psalmist asks God to help
3. **Affirmation** - The psalmist affirms trust in God despite the suffering

The significant point: Christianity honors complaint and questioning. We are not expected to suppress honest feelings about suffering. We can cry out to God.

**But** the laments do not end in despair. They end in trust. The psalmist moves from "Where are you, God?" to "I trust you anyway."

## THE PROBLEM OF ANIMAL SUFFERING

A challenge to theodicy comes from animal suffering. Animals cannot choose to sin. Animals cannot understand moral lessons from suffering. Yet animals suffer from disease, predation, injury, and natural disaster.

### Scripture's Perspective

#### Proverbs 12:10 (KJV):

*"A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."*

Scripture acknowledges that animals have lives that matter morally.

#### Romans 8:19-22 (KJV):

*"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."*

Paul indicates that creation itself suffers and groans. Suffering extends beyond humans.

### **Theological Response**

While Scripture does not provide exhaustive explanation of animal suffering, theology suggests:

1. **Animals were not created for immortality** - Unlike humans made in God's image, animals are part of the physical creation subject to natural laws including aging and death
2. **God cares about animals** - God's providence extends to animals. Jesus noted that God cares even for sparrows
3. **Predation may be part of natural order** - While death and suffering exist in nature, this is part of how creation functions
4. **Redemption extends to creation** - Paul indicates that creation itself will be redeemed and restored

### **The Honest Answer**

Ultimately, animal suffering remains one of the harder aspects of the problem of evil to address. While we can offer responses, none fully satisfy the question of why innocent creatures must suffer. This points to the reality that the problem of evil is not entirely solved intellectually but ultimately answered through faith in God's character and promise of restoration.

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## PART 4: THE CROSS AS RESPONSE

The most profound Christian response to the problem of evil is not an argument but a person—Jesus Christ, and specifically the cross.

### GOD ENTERING SUFFERING

The cross is the point where God did not remain distant from suffering but entered into it.

#### **Philippians 2:5-8 (KJV):**

*"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."*

Jesus, who was God, emptied himself and took human form. Jesus did not remain in the safety of heaven but came to earth where suffering, pain, and death are real.

#### **Hebrews 4:15 (KJV):**

*"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."*

Jesus experienced human weakness and temptation. Jesus understands human suffering because Jesus experienced it.

## JESUS'S EXPERIENCE OF PAIN AND ABANDONMENT

Jesus did not just pass through the world untouched by suffering. Jesus experienced severe suffering.

### Physical Suffering

- Jesus was flogged (whipped)
- Jesus was crucified—one of the most agonizing forms of execution
- Crucifixion involved slow, deliberate pain

### Emotional Suffering

- Jesus was betrayed by a close disciple
- Jesus's closest followers abandoned him
- Jesus was mocked and humiliated
- Jesus faced the knowledge of approaching death

**Spiritual Suffering** Most profoundly, Jesus experienced spiritual anguish:

**Matthew 27:46 (KJV):**

*"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"*

Jesus cried out: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This echoes Psalm 22, expressing profound spiritual anguish. Jesus experienced what feels like abandonment by God—not actually abandonment (God was present to accomplish redemption) but the experience of abandonment.

**Hebrews 5:7-8 (KJV):**

*"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."*

Jesus prayed with tears. Jesus learned obedience through suffering. Jesus experienced real human suffering.

## WHY THIS MATTERS

God did not remain aloof from suffering. God entered into suffering. This has profound implications:

**God Understands Suffering** Jesus has experienced suffering personally. Jesus understands physical pain, betrayal, loss, and spiritual anguish. Jesus is not a distant deity but one who has walked the path of suffering.

**God Suffers With Us** When believers suffer, Jesus suffers with them. Jesus is present in suffering not as a detached observer but as one who has experienced it.

**Suffering Is Not Meaningless** Jesus's suffering was not arbitrary or pointless. Jesus's suffering accomplished redemption. It shows that suffering, when borne with faith, can be redemptive.

## SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT AND REDEMPTIVE SUFFERING

Christian theology teaches that Jesus's death was substitutionary—Jesus died in our place.

**1 Peter 2:24 (KJV):**

*"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."*

Jesus bore our sins. Jesus's suffering was for us.

### What This Means for Suffering

This doctrine suggests something profound about suffering: Suffering can be redemptive. Jesus's suffering redeemed the world. Similarly, our suffering, when united with Christ's and offered in faith, can be redemptive—for ourselves and for others.

**2 Corinthians 1:3-7 (KJV):**

*"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation."*

Paul indicates that comfort received through suffering can be shared with others. Our experience of suffering and God's comfort enables us to comfort others.

## THE RESURRECTION AS VICTORY OVER EVIL

The problem of evil is not answered on the cross alone but through the resurrection.

### 1 Corinthians 15:54-57 (KJV):

*"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

The resurrection demonstrates that death is not final. Evil is not ultimate. God has won the victory.

### What This Means

The resurrection shows that:

1. **Evil is not eternal** - Suffering and death are not ultimate realities. They are temporary
2. **God's power exceeds evil** - God has power to resurrect, to restore, to defeat death
3. **Suffering leads to glory** - Jesus's suffering led to resurrection and exaltation
4. **We will be resurrected** - Believers will share in resurrection

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# PART 5: BIBLICAL APPROACHES TO SUFFERING

## THE BOOK OF JOB: QUESTIONING GOD

We've touched on Job, but let's explore it more deeply as the Bible's most extended treatment of innocent suffering.

### **The Problem Stated**

Job was righteous. Job kept God's law, lived ethically, performed religious duties, and was blessed with family, wealth, and health.

### **Job's Suffering**

In a single day:

- Sabeans stole Job's oxen and donkeys
- Fire from heaven killed Job's sheep and servants
- Chaldeans stole Job's camels
- A wind killed all of Job's children

Subsequently, Job contracted a severe skin disease that caused intense pain.

### **Job's Response**

Job's initial response was submissive:

**Job 1:20-22 (KJV):**

*"Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."*

Job accepted the loss. But as his suffering continued, Job began to question.

### **Job's Complaint**

Eventually, Job's questions became protests:

#### **Job 3:11-12 (KJV):**

*"Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? Why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts that I should suck?"*

Job wishes he had died at birth. His suffering has become unbearable.

#### **Job 23:2-5 (KJV):**

*"Even to day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me."*

Job wants to confront God. Job wants to present his case, to argue that his suffering is unjust.

### **Job's Friends**

Three friends came to comfort Job. But their comfort became condemnation. They suggested that Job must have sinned—otherwise, why would God allow his suffering?

**Eliphaz said:** "Think now, who that was innocent ever perished? Those that plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed."

In other words: Innocent people don't suffer. You must have sinned.

**Bildad said:** Similar things. If Job repents of his hidden sin, God will restore him.

**Zophar said:** More of the same.

### **The Friends' Error**

The friends assume that suffering is always punishment for sin. This is a common theological error. The friends cannot imagine innocent suffering.

## God's Evaluation of the Friends

After Job's arguments with his friends, a young man named Elihu speaks, then God speaks directly.

### Job 42:7-8 (KJV):

*"And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, like my servant Job."*

God is angry with the friends. They have not spoken truthfully. Job, despite his complaints, has spoken more truth about God than the friends with their platitudes.

## What Job Teaches

The Book of Job teaches:

1. **Innocent suffering happens** - Righteous people can suffer without it being punishment for sin
2. **Questioning is allowed** - We can cry out to God with our suffering
3. **Platitudes are insufficient** - Easy answers fail to address real suffering

4. **Relationship matters more than explanation** - Job didn't get intellectual answers, but Job encountered God

5. **Trust survives mystery** - Job maintained faith while not understanding

## LAMENTS IN THE PSALMS

We've mentioned laments. Let's explore them more fully.

### The Function of Laments

Laments serve several functions:

1. **They validate emotion** - The psalmist's tears and questions are not sinful
2. **They seek God** - Even in anger, the psalmist seeks God
3. **They trust** - Despite questions, the psalmist trusts

### Psalm 42 (KJV):

*"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?"*

The psalmist's tears are mentioned. The psalmist's thirst for God is expressed. The psalmist's questions are voiced. And yet:

*"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."*

The psalmist moves from despair to hope. Not by denying the suffering but by trusting God anyway.

#### **Psalm 88 (KJV):**

This is the darkest of the laments:

*"O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee: Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry; For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength: Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves."*

The psalmist feels abandoned by God. God seems to have afflicted the psalmist. And remarkably, the psalm does not end with resolution:

*"O Lord, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me?"*

The psalm ends with the question unresolved. The psalmist does not get the comfort or explanation the other laments receive.

### What This Teaches

Psalm 88 teaches that it is acceptable to have faith while remaining in pain, questioning, and unresolved suffering. Not all suffering is resolved or explained. We are allowed to bring that unresolved suffering to God.

## PAUL'S THORN IN THE FLESH

Paul describes an experience of suffering in 2 Corinthians 12:

### 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (KJV):

*"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."*

### Paul's Suffering

Paul had some kind of affliction he called "a thorn in the flesh." We don't know what it was—possibly chronic pain, illness, or some other persistent suffering.

### **Paul's Prayer**

Paul prayed three times that God would remove the suffering. This is significant. Paul did not immediately accept suffering. Paul asked God to take it away.

### **God's Response**

God did not remove the suffering. Instead, God said: "My grace is sufficient for you. My power is made perfect in weakness."

### **Paul's Response**

Paul accepted this answer. Paul came to see the suffering as beneficial—it kept Paul humble and dependent on God's grace.

### **What This Teaches**

This passage teaches:

- 1. It's acceptable to ask God to remove suffering** - Paul prayed for relief
- 2. God may not remove suffering** - God did not remove Paul's thorn
- 3. Suffering has purpose** - Paul's suffering kept him from pride
- 4. Grace is sufficient** - Even when suffering remains, God's grace sustains
- 5. Weakness can be spiritual strength** - Dependence on God is strength

## PETER'S TEACHING ON SUFFERING

### 1 Peter 1:6-7 (KJV):

*"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."*

Peter teaches that trials test faith, and the testing of faith produces spiritual value more precious than gold.

### 1 Peter 4:12-14 (KJV):

*"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."*

Peter indicates that suffering for Christ's sake is an honor. Suffering identifies the believer with Christ.

### What This Teaches

Peter presents suffering as:

- A test that produces spiritual value
- An opportunity to share in Christ's suffering
- A way to identify with Christ
- Temporary ("fiery trial")
- Leading to glory

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# PART 6: TYPES OF SUFFERING AND SPECIFIC RESPONSES

Different types of suffering raise different questions and may require different spiritual responses.

## SUFFERING FROM SIN AND WRONGDOING

When someone suffers as a consequence of their own sin or the sin of others, this raises particular questions about justice, forgiveness, and redemption.

### **Suffering from One's Own Sin**

Sometimes people suffer consequences directly resulting from their own choices:

- A person engaging in reckless behavior experiences injury
- A person's dishonesty is discovered, causing loss of job and reputation
- A person's infidelity destroys their marriage
- A person's addiction leads to health problems and loss of relationships

### **Theological Response**

Scripture teaches that sin has consequences:

**Romans 6:23 (KJV):**

*"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Sin produces consequences. This is not arbitrary punishment but the natural fruit of wrong choices.

#### **Galatians 6:7-8 (KJV):**

*"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."*

We reap what we sow.

#### **Spiritual Response**

When someone suffers from consequences of their own sin:

1. **Acknowledge responsibility** - Not blaming others or claiming victim status
2. **Repent** - Turn from the sin
3. **Seek forgiveness** - From God and those harmed
4. **Learn** - Allow suffering to teach wisdom
5. **Move forward** - Use the lesson to avoid future harm

#### **Grace in Suffering from Sin**

Importantly, even when suffering results from sin, God's grace is available:

**Romans 8:1 (KJV):**

*"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."*

In Christ, there is no condemnation. Suffering may result from sin, but it need not define us forever.

## SUFFERING FROM NATURAL CAUSES

When someone suffers from disease, aging, accident, or natural disaster, this raises questions about whether these are God's actions, natural processes, or something else.

### Theological Perspectives

**God's Will** Some believe that all events, including illness and disaster, are God's will. God ordains all things.

**Natural Law** Others believe that God set natural laws in motion, and natural processes operate through these laws. Illness and disaster result from natural processes, not direct divine action.

**God's Providence** Most believe that while natural processes operate, God providentially works through them and with them toward God's purposes.

### Spiritual Response

When suffering from natural causes:

1. **Seek healing** - Medical care, treatment, recovery efforts
2. **Trust God's presence** - God is present even if not preventing the suffering
3. **Find meaning** - Look for spiritual growth or redemptive purpose
4. **Accept limits** - Some suffering may not be cured in this life
5. **Hope in resurrection** - Ultimate healing comes in resurrection

## SUFFERING FROM INJUSTICE

When someone suffers because of another's wrongdoing—  
injustice, abuse, exploitation—this raises particularly acute  
questions about God's justice and God's response.

### Types of Injustice

- Crime: assault, robbery, rape, murder
- Exploitation: unfair labor practices, abuse of power
- Discrimination: prejudice based on race, gender, class
- Systemic oppression: unjust systems that harm vulnerable populations
- Corruption: those in power abusing that power

### Theological Tension

The difficulty here is that the victim is innocent. The victim did nothing to deserve the harm. Yet the victim suffers while the perpetrator often escapes justice.

### God's Justice

Scripture teaches that God sees injustice and will ultimately judge:

**Romans 12:19 (KJV):**

*"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."*

God will repay. Injustice will be ultimately addressed.

**But the "When"**

The problem is the timing. God's justice may not come immediately. The victim must live with the injustice while waiting for God's ultimate justice.

**Spiritual Response**

When suffering injustice:

1. **Seek justice through proper channels** - Law enforcement, courts, authorities
2. **Don't retaliate** - Leave vengeance to God
3. **Forgive if possible** - Not to excuse the perpetrator but to free yourself
4. **Trust God's justice** - God will ultimately judge all wrongs
5. **Find community support** - Others who can help carry the burden

**Justice and Mercy**

An important theological note: God's justice is not just punishment of wrongdoing. God's justice also includes vindication of the innocent and restoration of what was lost.

## SUFFERING FROM LOSS AND GRIEF

Loss comes in many forms: death of a loved one, end of a relationship, loss of health, loss of dreams and hopes, loss of identity.

### The Reality of Grief

Grief is a real response to real loss. It is not sin. It is not lack of faith.

### Jesus wept:

#### John 11:35 (KJV):

*"Jesus wept."*

Jesus wept at the death of Lazarus, his friend. Jesus, fully God and fully human, experienced genuine grief.

### Spiritual Response to Grief

1. **Allow the grief** - Don't suppress or minimize it
2. **Express it honestly** - In prayer, to friends, in lament
3. **Lean on community** - Let others support you
4. **Trust in resurrection** - God will ultimately restore what is lost
5. **Find meaning** - Over time, grieve constructively

### The Timeline of Grief

Grief does not follow a simple timeline. The old model (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance) is not universal. People move through grief differently, and grief can resurface at unexpected times.

## SUFFERING FROM ILLNESS AND DISEASE

When suffering from chronic illness or serious disease, particular struggles arise.

### Loss of Control

Illness can make people feel powerless. Bodies do what they will, independent of our desires.

### Identity Disruption

People often identify with their health and abilities. Illness disrupts this. The person one thought oneself to be becomes different.

### Spiritual Questions

- Why me?
- Is this punishment?
- Will I recover?
- What is my life for if I'm limited?

### Spiritual Response

1. **Accept the reality** - Fighting reality wastes energy
2. **Seek appropriate care** - Medical treatment when available
3. **Adjust expectations** - Find purpose within limitations

4. **Lean on faith** - Trust God's sustaining presence

5. **Find community** - Others with similar experiences can help

### Scripture on Weakness

**2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (KJV):**

*"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."*

Paul learned that in weakness, God's power is displayed.

## SUFFERING FROM MENTAL ANGUISH

Depression, anxiety, trauma, and spiritual despair are real forms of suffering, though less visible than physical pain.

### The Validity of Mental Suffering

Mental suffering is not weakness or lack of faith. Mental illness, anxiety disorders, and depression are real conditions deserving compassion and treatment.

### Biblical Figures and Mental Anguish

**Elijah experienced depression:**

**1 Kings 19:4 (KJV):**

*"But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."*

The great prophet Elijah wanted to die. He was depressed and discouraged.

#### **David experienced despair:**

#### **Psalm 42:5 (KJV):**

*"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."*

David was cast down. David's soul was disquieted.

#### **Spiritual and Medical Response**

1. **Seek professional help** - Therapy, counseling, medical treatment when appropriate
2. **Prayer and spiritual practice** - Not as substitute for professional help but as complement
3. **Community support** - Don't isolate
4. **Self-care** - Sleep, nutrition, exercise, rest
5. **Trust in God's care** - God cares for the mentally suffering

# PART 7: SPIRITUAL GROWTH THROUGH SUFFERING

One major theodicy is that suffering produces spiritual growth.

Let's examine how this works and its limits.

## SUFFERING AS TEACHER

Suffering teaches lessons that comfort and ease cannot.

### Humility

Suffering teaches humility. It teaches that we are not in ultimate control. It teaches that we are dependent on God and others.

#### **Romans 12:3 (KJV):**

*"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."*

Suffering can teach sober self-assessment.

### Compassion

Suffering teaches compassion. Someone who has never suffered cannot fully understand another's pain. But someone who has suffered can identify with another's pain and offer genuine

compassion.

**Isaiah 53:3 (KJV):**

*"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; and he was despised, and we esteemed him not."*

The Messiah is described as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." This acquaintance with grief enables compassion.

**Patience**

Suffering teaches patience—the ability to endure, to wait, to persist.

**James 1:3-4 (KJV):**

*"Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."*

Trials work patience, which works completeness.

**Wisdom**

Suffering teaches wisdom—the ability to discern, to understand, to see more clearly.

**Job 28:28 (KJV):**

*"And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."*

Wisdom involves understanding the spiritual reality—that God is ultimate and our primary concern should be relating rightly to God.

## CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH HARSHIP

The idea that hardship develops character is not new. Athletes train with difficulty to develop strength. Muscles develop through resistance. Similarly, character develops through resistance.

### **Virtues That Develop Through Challenge**

**Courage:** Requires facing fear

**Perseverance:** Requires continuing despite difficulty

**Integrity:** Requires maintaining principles despite pressure

**Forgiveness:** Requires responding to wrongdoing with grace

**Love:** Requires sacrificing for others

**Faith:** Requires trusting despite uncertainty

All these virtues develop more fully in the context of challenge than in comfort.

### **The Limit**

However, suffering does not automatically produce these virtues. Suffering can also produce bitterness, despair, and hardness. The outcome depends partly on the person's response to suffering and partly on God's grace working in the person's life.

## COMPASSION BORN FROM PAIN

One of the most valuable fruits of suffering is the ability to genuinely comfort others.

**2 Corinthians 1:3-5 (KJV):**

*"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ."*

Paul teaches that we are comforted so that we might comfort others. Our suffering experiences give us the ability to offer genuine comfort.

### The Witness of Others

The most powerful witness to faith is often someone who has suffered and maintained faith. When someone says "I've experienced what you're experiencing, and I've found God's grace sufficient," it carries weight that theoretical arguments cannot.

## FAITH DEEPENED THROUGH TRIAL

Faith tested is faith strengthened.

**1 Peter 1:6-7 (KJV):**

*"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."*

Peter compares the trial of faith to refining gold with fire. Gold is tested and purified through fire. Faith is tested and strengthened through trial.

### What This Means

Before trial, faith may be untested belief. After trial, faith becomes something more—tested trust. The difference is significant.

## HOPE REFINED THROUGH ADVERSITY

**Romans 5:3-5 (KJV):**

*"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."*

Paul describes a progression: tribulation → patience → experience → hope.

Suffering, when endured faithfully, develops patience. Patience develops experience (tested character). Experience develops hope.

But notice: This hope "makes not ashamed." This is not naive optimism that everything will work out. This is hope grounded in God's proven faithfulness.

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# PART 8: PRACTICAL RESPONSE TO SUFFERING

While philosophical and theological answers matter, the practical question remains: How do I live faithfully while suffering?

## WHAT TO DO WHEN FAITH FAILS

Sometimes, in suffering, faith fails. The person who believed strongly finds themselves doubting. The person who trusted finds themselves questioning.

### This Is Normal

Doubt in suffering is not sin. It is human.

**When Peter walked on water, he began to sink:**

**Matthew 14:28-31 (KJV):**

*"And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?"*

Peter doubted. Peter began to sink. But Jesus saved him. Jesus did not condemn Peter for doubt but saved him from it.

### Steps When Faith Falters

1. **Be honest about the doubt** - Don't pretend to believe what you don't
2. **Cry out to God** - Even with doubt, bring it to God
3. **Seek community** - Tell others you're struggling
4. **Don't isolate** - Isolation deepens doubt
5. **Wait** - Don't make major decisions while in doubt
6. **Trust God's faithfulness** - Even if your faith is weak, God's faithfulness remains

## PRAYER IN THE DARKNESS

Prayer is often portrayed as bringing requests to God in calm, peaceful settings. But prayer in suffering looks different.

### Types of Prayer in Suffering

**Lamentation** Crying out to God about pain, asking why, expressing anger and confusion.

#### Psalm 88 (KJV):

*"O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee:  
Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry."*

**Petition** Asking God for help, healing, relief.

**Matthew 6:11 (KJV):**

*"Give us this day our daily bread."*

Even in the prayer Jesus taught, we ask God for what we need.

**Praise** Thanking God even in suffering, affirming God's goodness despite circumstances.

**Psalm 42:11 (KJV):**

*"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."*

Even while cast down, the psalmist will praise God.

**Intercession** Praying for others who are suffering.

**Collects** Praying traditional prayers that others have prayed, allowing their faith to strengthen ours.

**Silence** Sometimes prayer is simply sitting before God, without words.

**Romans 8:26 (KJV):**

*"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."*

The Spirit prays for us when we cannot pray.

## COMMUNITY AND SUPPORT IN SUFFERING

Suffering should not be borne alone.

### Job's Friends Came to Him

#### Job 2:11-13 (KJV):

*"Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him. And when they saw him, they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great."*

Job's friends came. They sat with him. They were silent. This was genuine comfort.

(Their mistake came later when they started offering explanations and judgment instead of continuing their compassionate presence.)

## What Community Offers

**Presence:** Just showing up matters **Listening:** Hearing without judgment **Practical help:** Meals, childcare, errands **Prayer:** Praying on behalf of the sufferer **Witness:** Others testifying to God's faithfulness **Accompaniment:** Not solving the problem but walking through it together

## The Church's Role

The church (the body of Christ) is meant to bear one another's burdens:

### Galatians 6:2 (KJV):

*"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."*

### Romans 12:15 (KJV):

*"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."*

The church weeps with those who weep. The church bears burdens with those who suffer.

## CARE FOR THE GRIEVING AND HURTING

If you are with someone who is suffering, what helps?

### Listen More Than You Speak

People in pain need to be heard, not fixed.

### **Avoid Platitudes**

"God works all things together for good" is true, but it's not helpful when someone is newly grieving.

### **Avoid Blame**

Don't suggest the person caused their suffering or deserved it.

### **Offer Practical Help**

Bring meals. Help with errands. Take on specific tasks.

### **Be Present**

Sometimes the most important thing is simply being there.

### **Check In Over Time**

People often receive immediate support after loss, but months later when others have moved on, the grieving person is still struggling. Check in regularly.

### **Share Your Own Struggle**

If you've suffered similarly, sharing your experience can help. But don't make it about you—keep focus on the other person.

## **MEANING-MAKING IN SUFFERING**

A question that often arises: Does this suffering have meaning?  
What is its purpose?

### **Different Types of Meaning**

**Redemptive Meaning** Some suffering produces growth, strengthens relationships, or serves others. A person's illness brings family closer. A person's struggle gives them insight to help others.

**Symbolic Meaning** Some suffering, while not pleasant, becomes a symbol of something important. A cross becomes a symbol of redemption.

**Spiritual Meaning** Some suffering becomes a means of encountering God more deeply. Suffering strips away distractions and forces us to consider what's ultimate.

**No Meaning** Some suffering does not have discernible meaning. A child dies. This is not fair. It serves no purpose that we can see. And that is okay. We don't have to pretend there's meaning when there isn't.

### **The Process**

Making meaning from suffering is a process that often takes time. Immediately after tragedy, don't expect meaning to be apparent. But over time, some people find that their suffering, while still tragic, becomes connected to something larger.

## **FINDING PURPOSE IN PAIN**

Related to meaning-making is finding purpose. How can I use this suffering?

### **Helping Others**

Someone who has experienced grief can offer genuine help to others grieving. Someone who has faced illness can encourage others facing illness.

## **Witness**

Someone's faithfulness through suffering becomes a witness to God's grace.

## **Advocacy**

Someone whose child was killed by drunk driving might work to prevent others' children from dying the same way.

## **Deepened Relationship with God**

Suffering can deepen a person's relationship with God and commitment to serving God.

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## PART 9: THE ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

Christianity addresses suffering not just in the present but in light of eternity.

### GOD'S PROMISE OF RESTORATION

God promises that suffering will end and restoration will come.

**Revelation 21:1-4 (KJV):**

*"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And 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: for the former things are passed away."*

This is the ultimate answer to suffering. Suffering will end. God will be present. God will wipe away tears. There will be no more pain.

# THE NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH

Christianity does not promise escape from creation but transformation of creation.

## **The Promise is Not:**

- Escape to heaven as a disembodied spirit
- Destruction of the physical world
- Withdrawal from creation

## **The Promise Is:**

- Transformation and renewal of creation
- Embodied existence in a renewed world
- Direct presence of God on earth

## **2 Peter 3:13 (KJV):**

*"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."*

A new heaven and new earth—not replacement but renewal.

## **What This Means for Suffering**

This means:

- Suffering is temporary, not eternal
- Creation will be healed, not abandoned
- Our bodies will be restored (in resurrection)

- God's intention is restoration, not destruction
- Physical reality matters; God does not just care for souls but for bodies and world

## ULTIMATE JUSTICE AND RESOLUTION

Every wrong will be made right. Every injustice will be addressed. Every victim will be vindicated.

### Revelation 6:9-11 (KJV):

*"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."*

John's vision shows martyrs crying out for justice. God acknowledges their cry. Justice will come.

### Matthew 12:36 (KJV):

*"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."*

Every word will be accounted for. Every action will be judged. Nothing escapes God's judgment.

## RESURRECTION AND HOPE

The hope of Christianity centers on resurrection—not escape from this world but embodied return to a renewed world.

**1 Corinthians 15:42-58 (KJV):**

*"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit."*

Our resurrection will be:

- Incorrputible (no decay, disease, or death)
- Glorious (transformed beauty)
- Powerful (no weakness or limitation)
- Spiritual (fully attuned to God)

### The Significance

Resurrection means:

- Death is not final

- The physical body matters (we are resurrected bodily, not just spiritually)
- God's purpose includes us—not withdrawing to leave us behind
- Relationships will continue (we will know one another in resurrection)
- All we have suffered will be redeemed

## THE TRIUMPH OF GOOD OVER EVIL

Ultimately, Christianity teaches that good triumphs over evil. God wins. Love wins. Justice wins.

### **Revelation 19:11-16 (KJV):**

*"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."*

Jesus returns as the righteous judge. Evil is defeated. God's kingdom is fully established.



# PART 10: ADDRESSING SPECIFIC OBJECTIONS

## THE PROBLEM OF ANIMAL SUFFERING

Animals suffer but cannot choose to sin and cannot understand moral lessons. Why would a loving God create a world where innocent animals suffer?

### Partial Answers

**Animals were not created for immortality:** Unlike humans made in God's image with spiritual nature, animals are part of the physical creation subject to natural laws.

**God cares about animals:** Jesus taught that God cares for sparrows. God's concern extends to all creation.

**Predation and death are part of natural order:** While we might wish for a world without predation, the natural world operates on these patterns.

**Animals don't possess the kind of suffering we do:** Animals experience pain, but they don't anticipate future suffering or grieve past suffering the way humans do.

### Honest Acknowledgment

The suffering of innocent animals remains one of the harder aspects of the problem of evil to address satisfactorily. While we can offer responses, animal suffering is a genuine difficulty.

# THE PROBLEM OF INNOCENT CHILDREN SUFFERING

A child born with a disease that causes lifelong pain has not chosen sin. Why would God allow this?

## Partial Answers

### **The child's suffering may not be punishment but may be a test:**

The child's illness may develop the child's character or may provide an occasion for others to show compassion and faith.

**Suffering may serve redemptive purposes:** God can work through the child's illness toward purposes we cannot see.

**The child's suffering is temporary:** In the context of eternity, even a lifetime of suffering is temporary.

**God suffers with the child:** God in Christ has experienced suffering and understands.

## Honest Acknowledgment

The suffering of innocent children is particularly difficult. While we believe God is good and wise, a child suffering through no fault of their own challenges our understanding. We must acknowledge the reality of this difficulty while maintaining faith in God's ultimate goodness.

# THE PROBLEM OF EXCESSIVE SUFFERING

Some suffering seems excessive and unjustifiable. A person is tortured. A family is destroyed. Suffering that serves no discernible purpose continues indefinitely.

## Partial Answers

**God's purposes exceed our understanding:** We see only part of reality. God sees all.

**Suffering may have redemptive purposes we cannot see:** What seems pointless to us may serve God's larger purposes.

**Evil's destructiveness exceeds what's justified:** When someone chooses to do evil, the consequences of that evil can be severe. God permits this as part of respecting human freedom.

### **The Duration of Suffering**

From an eternal perspective, even prolonged suffering is temporary. This doesn't eliminate the problem, but it places it in perspective.

### **Honest Acknowledgment**

Some suffering does seem excessive and unjustifiable. We cannot always explain it. We must hold together the conviction that God is good with the reality of suffering that seems to exceed any justifiable purpose.

## **THE PROBLEM OF DIVINE HIDDENNESS**

If God exists and is good, why is God not more obvious? Why don't we have undeniable proof of God's existence? Why is God hidden?

### **Answers**

**Faith requires hiddenness:** If God were undeniable, faith would be impossible. Belief would be forced assent to obvious truth.

**Freedom requires hiddenness:** A God who was constantly intervening and undeniably present would be manipulative, not free.

**God has revealed himself sufficiently:** Through creation, Scripture, and Jesus, God has provided enough for faith.

**God continues to reveal:** For those seeking God, God makes himself known through prayer, Scripture study, and spiritual experience.

### **Honest Acknowledgment**

The hiddenness of God is real. Many genuinely seek and feel they don't find. This is a legitimate complaint. While theological explanations can help, they don't eliminate the difficulty of not experiencing God's presence.

## **THE PROBLEM OF UNANSWERED PRAYER**

Why does God sometimes answer prayer and sometimes not? Why does God seem to answer some people's prayers and not others'?

### **Answers**

**Some prayers are not answered in the way requested:** God may say no or wait rather than yes.

**Spiritual maturity includes accepting no:** A parent loves a child even while refusing the child's requests.

**Unanswered prayer can deepen faith:** Praying and trusting despite not receiving the desired answer develops deeper faith.

**We see only our perspective:** We don't see all the reasons God answers or doesn't answer as we request.

### **Honest Acknowledgment**

Unanswered prayer is real and painful. We've prayed for healing and the person died. We've prayed for reconciliation and the relationship ended. The silence of God in response to earnest prayer is difficult.

## **THE PROBLEM OF RANDOMNESS IN SUFFERING**

Suffering often seems random and arbitrary. One person develops cancer; another doesn't. One person survives an accident; another dies. Why is there such randomness?

### **Answers**

**Natural laws operate:** Disease, accidents, and natural disasters operate through natural laws. These operate according to probability.

**Sin is not always the cause of suffering:** Jesus explicitly taught this when asked about a man born blind.

**God can work through randomness:** Even events that seem random to us may serve God's purposes.

**Randomness preserves freedom:** A world where events are utterly predetermined would lack human freedom.

### **Honest Acknowledgment**

The randomness of suffering is real. Some people are struck by tragedy; others are spared. This arbitrary distribution of suffering is difficult to reconcile with God's justice, even if logically coherent.

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# CONCLUSION: FAITH IN THE DARKNESS

We have examined the problem of evil and suffering from many angles—philosophical, theological, pastoral, practical, and biblical. Let's draw together some conclusions.

## WHAT WE KNOW

**God is good:** This is foundational to Christian faith. God is not capricious, malevolent, or indifferent. God is essentially good.

**Suffering is real:** We don't minimize suffering or pretend it away. Suffering is real, painful, and often unjust.

**God suffers:** God entered into suffering through Jesus. God understands suffering because God experienced it.

**Suffering can produce growth:** Not automatically, and not always, but suffering can develop character, compassion, and faith.

**Suffering is temporary:** From an eternal perspective, suffering will end. God promises restoration.

**God will bring justice:** Every wrong will be addressed. Every victim will be vindicated.

**God is with us:** In suffering, God is present. We are not abandoned.

## WHAT REMAINS MYSTERY

**Why specific suffering happens:** Why did this person develop cancer and not that person? Why this accident, this tragedy? We don't always know.

**Why God permits what God could prevent:** If God is all-powerful and all-good, we can construct logical arguments for why God permits suffering, but ultimate understanding eludes us.

**How to measure suffering:** Is my suffering less valid because it's not as severe as another's? How do we compare suffering?

**When suffering serves purpose:** Some suffering clearly produces growth. Other suffering seems pointless. We cannot always discern which is which.

**How long to wait:** How long should someone endure suffering before losing faith? When is it appropriate to question God's goodness? We don't have simple answers.

## LIVING WITH THE TENSION

Christianity calls us to live with the tension between:

- God's power and God's apparent restraint
- God's goodness and the reality of suffering
- Intellectual understanding and emotional pain
- Hope and realism

This tension is not comfortable. It is not meant to be. But it is honest and real.

**2 Corinthians 4:8-9 (KJV):**

*"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."*

Paul describes life as troubled, perplexed, persecuted, and cast down—yet not distressed, not in despair, not forsaken, not destroyed.

We can acknowledge suffering's reality while maintaining hope. We can ask hard questions while trusting God. We can be honest about pain while celebrating God's goodness.

## THE RESPONSE OF FAITH

Ultimately, the problem of evil is not solved intellectually but encountered personally. It is addressed not primarily through argument but through relationship.

In the midst of suffering, what matters most is not a theodicy (defense of God's goodness) but a relationship—knowing God, trusting God, encountering God.

**Job did not get intellectual answers, but Job encountered God and found that sufficient.**

**The psalmist did not get explanations of suffering but cried out to God and found God present.**

**Paul's suffering was not removed, but God's grace was sufficient.**

**Jesus experienced abandonment but discovered resurrection.**

## THE INVITATION

To anyone suffering: Your pain is real. Your questions are valid. Your anger is understandable.

But God invites you into relationship. God invites you to:

- Bring your pain to God
- Ask your hard questions
- Trust despite not understanding
- Find community
- Encounter God's presence
- Hope in resurrection

**Philippians 4:6-7 (KJV):**

*"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and your minds through Christ Jesus."*

We are invited to bring everything to God—pain, questions, requests. And in doing so, we find peace that exceeds understanding.

## FAITH IN THE DARKNESS

The ultimate response to the problem of evil and suffering is not complete intellectual resolution but faith. Faith that trusts God despite not understanding. Faith that maintains hope despite

present pain. Faith that rests in God's character despite apparent contradiction between God's nature and the reality of suffering.

**Hebrews 11:1 (KJV):**

*"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."*

Faith is trust in what we have not seen. It is hope for what we do not yet possess.

In darkness, faith lights a candle. In silence, faith listens for God's voice. In pain, faith rests in God's arms.

**Romans 8:38-39 (KJV):**

*"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Nothing can separate us from God's love. Not suffering. Not death. Not pain. Not darkness.

In that love, even in suffering, we find what we most deeply need.

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# APPENDIX A: THEODICIES COMPARED

Theodicy	Main Argument	Strengths	Weaknesses
Free Will	Genuine freedom requires possible evil	Addresses moral evil well	Doesn't address natural evil
Soul-Making	Suffering develops character	Explains some suffering's purpose	Doesn't explain all suffering
Divine Hiddenness	Hidden God preserves freedom	Explains why God not obvious	Doesn't explain why extreme suffering
Greater Good	God sees purposes we don't	Maintains God's omniscience	Vague; seems evasive
Skeptical Theism	We lack knowledge to judge God	Honest about limits	Unfalsifiable; seems to evade problem
Open Theism	God doesn't know future entirely	Preserves freedom	Challenges traditional omniscience

# APPENDIX B: PRAYER RESOURCES FOR THE SUFFERING

**Psalm 23:** When you need comfort **Psalm 42:** When you're depressed **Psalm 88:** When you're in darkness **Lamentations:** When you need to lament **Job:** When you need to question **Romans 8:** When you need hope **2 Corinthians 1:** When you need comfort to share **1 Peter 1:** When you need faith strengthened

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All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible.

*This resource addresses one of Christianity's deepest challenges. May it help you wrestle honestly with suffering while maintaining faith in God's goodness.*

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END OF PUBLICATION