

“WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SUFFERING? ”

Selected Scriptures

Pastor Jeff Burkholder

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We must view suffering in the context of the biblical narrative.

Act 1 Fall/Creation (Genesis 1-3)

- Sin and suffering entered the world through man’s choice. (Genesis 3:1-24)
- God is not the author of evil, but He is the author of a story that includes evil. (James 1:13)

Quotes

“The first human sin, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God (see Genesis 3), initiated sweeping consequences, including a curse on the natural world. The initial moral evil loosed ever-expanding suffering. So suffering follows evil as a caboose follows an engine.”

Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good Why Do We Hurt?*,
Multnomah Books, Colorado Springs CO, p. 12.

“The story of the Fall in Genesis 3 most explicitly states what went wrong with God’s good creation. Moreover, it is a portrayal of our fallen patterns today, best understood in terms of four alienations: from God, other, self, and nature. In the Christian perception of reality, the heart of human and societal problems ultimately stems from sin....But underneath all ailments in the world is an understanding of our fallen condition and our rebellion against our Maker and his designs. Sin affects not only people, but also cultures and societies, and the institutions within them.”

Dennis Hollinger, *Head, Heart and Hands*,
Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, p. 52.

Application

We must accept injustice and suffering.

Act 2 Redemption (Acts 3:11-21)

- From the beginning God had a plan to defeat Satan and evil. (Genesis 3:15)
- God is working His plan to redeem and restore. (Acts 3:18, 21)
- God/Jesus entered into the sufferings of this world. (Isaiah 53:3; Mark 8:31; Hebrews 10:18)

Quotes

“Though the human race is badly fallen from God’s original designs, the story fortunately does not end in despair. As soon as humankind turns against its Maker, he begins a process to draw his creatures back to himself and to heal the breach that has infected every dimension of human life, culture and the natural world. In the Christian worldview, this redemption does not reside with human capabilities, but is initiated and effected by God’s own grace and redeeming actions, through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.”

Dennis Hollinger, *Head, Heart and Hands*,
Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, p. 53.

“God doesn’t merely empathize with our sufferings. Because Jesus is God, what Jesus suffered, God suffered. God paid the highest price on our behalf; we therefore have no grounds for believing he doesn’t ‘get it’. Christ’s sacrifice addresses the very heart of the problem of evil and suffering. And one day it will prove to have been the final answer. Whenever you feel tempted to ask God, ‘Why are you doing this to me?’ look at the Cross and ask, ‘*Why did you do that for me?*’”

Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good Why Do We Hurt?*,
Multnomah Books, Colorado Springs, CO, pp. 74-75.

Application

We must believe that in the midst of suffering God has purposes for our good and His Glory.

Act 3 Consummation (Revelation 21:1-8, 22:3)

- God will eliminate suffering. (Revelation 21:1-5)
- God will bring justice. (Revelation 21:6-8)
- God will eliminate sin's curse. (Revelation 22:3)

Quotes

“When we’re living peacefully on the New Earth, where joy will permeate the very air we breathe, we’ll look back at this present world and affirm not by faith but by sight that all the evil and suffering was worth it—and that Christ’s incarnation and redemption have made the universe eternally better.

Meanwhile we can join Paul, a man who’d been given a glimpse of heaven, in saying by faith, ‘I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us’ (Romans 8:18). Many people believe this life is all there is—you only go around once, so grab for whatever you can. But if you’re a child of God, then you do *not* just ‘go around once’; you’ll inhabit the New Earth forever! In order to share Christ’s glory forever on the New Earth, we must share his sufferings temporarily on the fallen Earth.”

Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good Why Do We Hurt?*, Multnomah Books, Colorado Springs, CO, pp. 51-52.

“Hell is the place where sin and evil are punished. Hell itself is *not* evil, despite the fact that it isn’t pleasant, appealing, or encouraging. Hell is morally good, because a just God must punish evil.

Sometimes we cry out for true and lasting justice, then fault God for taking evil too seriously by administering eternal punishment. But we can’t have it both ways. To argue against Hell is to argue against ultimate justice.”

Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good Why Do We Hurt?*, Multnomah Books, Colorado Springs, CO, p. 54.

Application

We can live with hope and purpose in the midst of suffering.

“Think of God as the Storyteller. With grand artistry, he brings forth a beautiful world in a spectacular universe (as we see in Genesis, the Bible’s first book). As the culmination of his creativity, he fashions Adam and Eve. He could have shielded them from Satan’s temptations, warding off evil and suffering and humanity’s curse. But he did not. The man and woman rebel against God, and evil enters the world.

Thousands of years go by as humanity’s struggle intensifies. God promises a Redeemer, and with eagerness his people look for one to come forth triumphantly, overthrowing their enemies and setting up his kingdom. But centuries of longing pass without the Redeemer’s appearance.

Finally, in a fantastic plot twist, the second member of the triune God is conceived as a child in the womb of a Galilean peasant, then born as a baby in a Bethlehem barn. Raised a humble carpenter, he explains the Scriptures, heals the sick, raises the dead, and allows others to torture and murder him. He does it all to redeem the people he loves. The darkest day of human history opens the door to the eternal light of Heaven. Jesus rises from the dead, commands and empowers his followers to serve him, then leaves but promises to return. With the force of his own resurrection to back it up, he reiterates the promise: one day he’ll make all things right and will come to live forever with his resurrected people on a resurrected Earth.”

Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good Why Do We Hurt?*,
Multnomah Books, Colorado Springs, CO, pp. 14-15.

“Now suppose *you* are the author of creation and human history and whatever story you wish to tell. Not liking that miserable part about Satan’s temptation and Adam and Eve’s sin, you strike it out. You also eliminate the ensuing conflicts, hatreds, lies, and murders that have marked one century after another. You erase all wars and heartbreaks, all yearnings for something better. Doesn’t everything seem good now?

But think about it. By not permitting the problems, you have taken away the solution. *You have taken away Jesus*. There would be no God-man, no incarnation, no *need* for incarnation. No first coming, no Second Coming. No New Heaven and New Earth, only the same old one continuing forever.”

Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good Why Do We Hurt?*,
Multnomah Books, Colorado Springs, CO, pp. 15-16.