

# SUFFERING - WHY?

## Why Do Bad Things Happen To Good People?

By Brooks A. Harris

Have you ever asked “Why does God allow good people to suffer? Can’t He stop or prevent situations which cause pain, suffering and death?” Many people use this idea to convince themselves that there is no god. They often say things like “If God is supposed to be all-knowing , all-powerful, and loves and cares for His people, why does He allow them to suffer? Why doesn’t He heal them?”

It is true that God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and has the ability to do anything He desires. Often He does heal people. He often removes tumors, cancers, and painful disorders. But why doesn’t He remove it from everyone? The Bible tells us that God’s ways are not our ways, His thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are far beyond our understanding. He knows what is best for each of us. He has a plan for each of us. If He allows people to continue to suffer, He has a reason for not healing them at this point.

Suffering often creates character. When we suffer, we learn to appreciate what we had before our loss. We often do not appreciate what we have until we lose it. Our suffering and loss gives opportunities for others to help us, opportunities for us to appreciate the help we receive, and opportunities for us to realize that we need help. When you suffer pain, grief, or loss, normal life stops or pauses and you think about your life in a different way. You learn not to take things for granted, as your health or other people in your life.

Often suffering changes your relationship with God. It will either cause you to doubt God’s existence or make you angry at God - wondering why He would allow or cause your suffering, OR it will cause you to grow closer to God. People grow closer in their relationship with God when they realize they are not invincible, that they need help, comfort, and reassurance that only God can provide.

I believe that God has a purpose for all His children - in this present life or in His heavenly kingdom to come. So He may be allowing this suffering to give us experiences which will help us develop into the people He wants us to be.

God’s heavenly kingdom will last forever - for eternity. Although our suffering may seem to last forever - for months, years, or even a lifetime for some people, we must remember that we are only in this present life for a brief moment compared to the eternity to come. This often gives people hope in living with their suffering - knowing that in their heavenly kingdom to come, there will be no more tears, no more pain, and no more suffering.

I don’t believe that God causes bad things to happen to us but He allows bad things to happen in order for us to learn and grow and be able to help others who are going through similar situations. Often people will listen to you and / or be more willing to accept help from you if they know that you understand their suffering, pain, or loss. You will better understand the pains of others if you have gone through the pain yourself. Also suffering, pain, and sorrow make us more humble, less prideful, less selfish and more appreciative or thankful for what God and others do for us.

Sometimes we suffer because of the sins, or decisions, of others and not just because of our own sins or decisions. The first man, Adam, was created perfect without any flaws, diseases or disorders. The whole world was perfect without any suffering, pain, deterioration or death, but man’s sin ( his rebellion against God or going against God’s command ) - the first sin or original sin - caused many changes.

Genesis 3:14 describes many changes which were caused by man’s sin: men, women and the entire animal kingdom would now endure pain, suffering, and death. These things too were now to be present upon earth: thorns, thistles, diseases, disorders, decay and deterioration.

Eventually mutations in organisms would have begun causing genetic defects, creating germs,

diseases and cancers. Generation after generation some of these problems have been passed down through the genes of organisms including man. Therefore many people get disorders every year from chance encounters with harmful organisms or their own defective genetic makeup.

Even natural disasters, as tornadoes, hurricanes, winds, local floods, lightning, earthquakes, and volcanoes, are indirect results of Adam's sin. Ever since Adam, man in general has tried to live his own life apart from God. By the time of Noah, humanity had become so corrupt and immoral that God destroyed all life on earth except some animals of the water and the animals saved on the ark. Noah's flood would have caused major permanent changes in our weather patterns, climates, atmosphere, geological activity, continental positioning and landscape. There were probably no natural disasters before the flood, but ever since the beginning of the world-wide flood, our earth has had natural disasters.

Ever since the fall of man, man's decisions and actions have caused suffering on themselves and others. Some decisions are intentional, as shooting sprees and drunk driving, while others are strictly accidental, as running a red light or skidding off the road in loose gravel. We live in a sinful world and society. Life itself is a risk. Every time we leave the house, we put our life at risk due to the consequences of decisions we and others make.

So, bad things can happen to good people because of chance encounters with germs and defective genes, because of our destructive lifestyles as drinking, drugs, and crime, or because of accidents caused by bad decisions by man. All of these things are ultimately results of the fall of man and man's sinful nature.

But we do know that God loves us so much that He gives us freedom to make our own decisions. He gave Adam that same freedom. Since man has a sinful nature, he often chooses to use his freedom to sin and to make his own decisions separate from God. God, as a parent, does not want any of His children to suffer, but He knows that we must accept our consequences and the consequences of other's decisions (even all the consequences of Adam's decision - his sin).

Before Adam and Eve sinned, they were perfect and therefore God walked amongst them. But once they sinned, being no longer perfect, they could no longer enjoy a perfect relationship with God. Immediately there was spiritual death, separation from God, due to man's desire to be as God and do things his own way and not obey God's instructions.

God also declared that the price for sin is death (Romans 6:23). So the first death in God's creation occurred when God sacrificed an animal to clothe Adam and Eve. He was showing them that sin is serious and deserves death, but instead of having Adam die physically, God made provisions for a substitute. The spilling of blood of a flawless animal served as the most appropriate substitute for man, until the death of a perfect man, Jesus Christ, redeemed man from his sins. The sacrificial animal was God's way of allowing people back into a relationship with Him. And now, accepting Jesus's sacrificial death is the way we develop that relationship.

Romans 3:23 states that we are all sinners and are separated from God (spiritually and physically). Therefore since the price for sin is death, we all are dead spiritually and in need of a savior, and we must all eventually die a physical death.

We all fall short of the standards of God's perfection and therefore we cannot enjoy a personal relationship with God without accepting Jesus as our savior. Jesus's sacrificial death on the cross paid the price of all the sins of all those who accept Jesus as their savior. Jesus became the sacrificial animal which allows us to enjoy God's presence in our lives, forever.

Fortunately, when we are reunited with God in the new heaven and new earth, there will no longer be any suffering, tears, sorrow or pain. This is God's promise to those who truly believe in Him. Therefore if you have doubts as to the existence of God or of the gospel of Jesus Christ, do what you can to learn the truth, be saved, and share in the hope of heaven.