

Why Does God Allow Suffering?

I Peter 4:12-19

I Peter 16

Introduction

Why does God allow suffering?

This is the most common question that people who refuse to listen to the gospel have asked me. It is the most common reason that people use to reject Jesus. "I can't believe in a God who allowed my grandma to have cancer, or who allowed the Holocaust, or Hurricane Betsy, or...."

This is also the most common thing that causes so-called Christians to desert King Jesus. A little suffering comes along in my life, and I am out of here.

Last time we generally studied this passage, but today we want to look at three specific reasons the Bible gives for suffering in I Peter.

I. So That We Can Give Ourselves Over To the Will of God

(Read I Peter 4:1-5)

Our reaction to suffering sets us apart from the way people in the world react to suffering.

When I was in college I was the college activities director at Immanuel Baptist Church in Hattiesburg. One of the activities that we did was to visit in the nursing home.

Mrs. Taylor was a resident there.

Folks, I have see a lot of people suffering in my ministry over the years, but I have never seen anything like Mrs. Taylor.

Arthritis had her completely rolled up into a little ball of a person in the fetal position. She was in constant agony. You could see it and almost feel it. She refused to take pain medicine because her roommate had seizures and Mrs. Taylor wanted to always be alert so that she could call for help if need be.

When you entered Mrs. Taylor's room, you felt Jesus. She literally lit up as she asked you how things were going in college. She always wanted to pray about specific needs in your life. She has a notebook and pencil beside her bed. She could no longer write, but she wanted you to write your prayer needs down for her so she could pray for you.

What was the difference in Mrs. Taylor's suffering and most of our suffering?

She had given herself over to the will of God.

Christians suffering so they can surrender more of themselves to God.

I'm not there yet, but I want to be. Do you?

The second thing that this passage teaches us about suffering is that...

II. Suffering Should Be Expected

Matthew 5:11- ***God will bless you when people insult you, mistreat you, and tell all kinds of evil lies about you because of me.***

Acts 5:41- ***The apostles left the council and were happy, because God had considered them worthy to suffer for the sake of Jesus.***

The wages of sin is death. The way to death is through suffering.

In this life; in these bodies, because of sin we are facing death- and suffering is a part of all of that.

Now, I am not always speaking of specific sin on your part.- Although if you eat two dozen donuts every day of your life there might be consequences.

In general, sin and its cumulative effects is causing a devolution of the human body. Yes, modern medicine has slowed that down some, but not by much. Look at how long people lived before the flood compared to today.

Finally, we need to realize that...

III. **Not All Suffering Is Punishment**

If we are living for God and we suffer, we can rejoice that we are suffering for God's glory.

We can stand firm and trust Him that all things will work for good.

Hebrews 12:7- ***Be patient when you are being corrected! This is how God treats his children. ...***

Conclusion

No matter what the reason is that we are suffering, God does use it.

Sometimes He uses it for discipline.

Hebrews 12:5-11- ***But you have forgotten that the Scriptures say to God's children, "When the Lord punishes you, don't make light of it, and when he corrects you, don't be discouraged. The Lord corrects the people he loves and disciplines those he calls his own." Be patient when you are being corrected! This is how God treats his children. Don't all parents correct their children? God corrects all of his children, and if he doesn't correct you, then you don't really belong to him. Our earthly fathers correct us, and we still respect them. Isn't it even better to be given true life by letting our spiritual Father correct us? Our human fathers***

correct us for a short time, and they do it as they think best. But God corrects us for our own good, because he wants us to be holy, as he is. It is never fun to be corrected. In fact, at the time it is always painful. But if we learn to obey by being corrected, we will do right and live at peace.

Sometimes He uses it as instruction.

David Jeremiah lists some of these purposes:

1. To train us in obedience.

Hebrews 5:7-8- God had the power to save Jesus from death. And while Jesus was on earth, he begged God with loud crying and tears to save him. He truly worshiped God, and God listened to his prayers. Jesus is God's own Son, but still he had to suffer before he could learn what it really means to obey God.

2. To produce patience.

Romans 5:3- And not only this, but we glory in afflictions also, knowing that afflictions work out patience

3. To prevent pride

II Corinthians 12:7-9- But to keep me from being puffed up with pride because of the many wonderful things I saw, I was given a painful physical ailment, which acts as Satan's messenger to beat me and keep me from being proud. Three times I prayed to the Lord about this and asked him to take it away. But his answer was: "My grace is all you need, for my power is greatest when you are weak." I am most happy, then, to be proud of my weaknesses, in order to feel the protection of Christ's power over me.

4. To teach God's ways

Psalm 119:65-71- *You have kept your promise, LORD, and you are good to me, your servant. Give me wisdom and knowledge, because I trust in your commands. Before you punished me, I used to go wrong, but now I obey your word. How good you are---how kind! Teach me your commands. The proud have told lies about me, but with all my heart I obey your instructions. They have no understanding, but I find pleasure in your law. My punishment was good for me, because it made me learn your commands.*

5. To prepare us to comfort others

II Corinthians 1:3-4- *Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merciful Father, the God from whom all help comes! He helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help others who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God.*

6. To prove us

I Timothy 4:14- *Use the gift you were given...*

An oyster layers an irritating speck of sand with a smooth surface until it becomes a pearl of great value. God layers our difficulties with His greatness and glory until we develop our own pear of great price- strength of character!

For the Christian suffering ALWAYS leads to this: STRENGTH OF CHARACTER!

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This is also the most common thing that causes so-called Christians to _____ King Jesus.

I. So That We Can Give Ourselves Over To the Will of God

Our reaction to suffering sets us _____ from the way people in the world react to suffering.

II. Suffering Should Be Expected

(Matthew 5:11; Acts 5:41)

The wages of sin is _____. The way to death is through _____.

In general, sin and its cumulative effects is causing a _____ of the human body.

III. Not All Suffering Is Punishment

(Hebrews 12:7)

If we are living for God and we suffer, we can _____ that we are suffering for God's glory.

Conclusion

(Hebrews 12:5-11; 5:7-8; Romans 5:3; II Corinthians 12:7-9; Psalm 119:65-67; II Corinthians 1:3-4; I Timothy 4:14)

No matter what the reason is that we are suffering, God does use it.

Sometimes He uses it for _____.

Sometimes He uses it as _____.

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1. To train us in _____.
2. To produce _____.
3. To prevent _____
4. To teach God's _____
5. To prepare us to _____ others
6. To _____ us

For the Christian suffering _____ leads to this: STRENGTH OF CHARACTER!

Possible Answers: ways, instruction, suffering, refuse, desert, devolution, obedience, comfort, prove, patience, rejoice, apart, death, discipline, pride, always