

Rom. 8:18: For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Intro: In Feb, 70 Christians were found beheaded in a church in the Democratic Republic of Congo. One estimate is that 62,000 Christians have been killed in Nigeria since 2000. Estimates are that about 20-25 thousand people starve to death every day in the world. 2,000 babies are killed in the womb through abortion every day in America alone. War in Israel/Gaza; war in Ukraine; war in Sudan; hatred; violence; rape; child abuse; disease; cancer; loss of wives; loss of children; relational pain: divorce & broken relationships; loneliness; suicide; depression; pain; & death. Why all this suffering? How should we as Christians think about suffering according to God's Word?

God ordained all suffering for His glory & your good & caused His Son to suffer most, so that you will never suffer again & be brought to God!

1. Suffering Is In The World Because Of Sin

All this suffering is in the world because our first parents did what God commanded them not to do: they ate a piece of fruit. All this pain in the world shows us the horrific evil of sin & the great holiness & glory of God!

John Piper: What makes sin sin is not first that it hurts people, but that it blasphemes God. This is the ultimate evil & the ultimate outrage in the universe. The glory of God is not honored. The holiness of God is not revered. The greatness of God is not admired. The power of God is not praised. The truth of God is not sought. The wisdom of God is not esteemed. The beauty of God is not treasured. The goodness of God is not savored. The faithfulness of God is not trusted. The promises of God are not relied upon. The commandments of God are not obeyed. The justice of God is not respected. The wrath of God is not feared. The grace of God is not cherished. The presence of God is not prized. The person of God is not loved. The infinite, all-glorious Creator of the universe, by whom and for whom all things exist – who holds every person's life in being at every moment – is disregarded, disbelieved, disobeyed, & dishonored by everybody in the world. That is the ultimate outrage of the universe. Why is it that people can become emotionally & morally indignant over poverty & exploitation & prejudice & the injustice of man against man & yet feel little or no remorse or indignation that God is so belittled? It's because of sin. That is what sin is. Sin is esteeming & valuing & honoring & enjoying man & his creations above God. So even our man-centered anger at the hurt of sin is part of sin. God is marginal in human life. That is our sin, our condition.

- **Rom. 5:12:** Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, & death through sin, & so death spread to all men because all sinned

- **Rom. 8:20:** For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope

- **Gen. 3:11-19:** He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹² The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, & I ate." ¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, & I ate." ¹⁴ The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock & above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, & dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you & the woman, & between your offspring & her offspring; he shall bruise your head, & you shall bruise his heel." ¹⁶ To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, & he shall rule over you." ¹⁷ & to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife & have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns & thistles it shall bring forth for you; & you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, & to dust you shall return."

Every time you see or feel or experience any kind of suffering, it should remind you of the great horror of sin, & it should remind you of the great holiness of God! Sin is horrible! Sin is horrible! Sin is horrible! God is holy! God is holy! God is holy!

2. Sometimes You Suffer Because Of Your Own Personal Sin

a. Sometimes you don't suffer b/c of your own personal sin: Job; Jn. 9:1-3: As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. & his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him - **2 Cor. 12:7-10:** So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, & calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

b. Sometimes you do suffer because of your own personal sin: 1) We can bring a lot of our own suffering on ourselves because of our own sin: pride, sexual sin, selfishness, selfishness in relationships, anger, sinful decisions - **Ps. 107:17-21:** Some were fools through their sinful ways, & because of their iniquities suffered affliction; ¹⁸ they loathed any kind of food, & they drew near to the gates of death. ¹⁹ Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, & he delivered them from their distress. ²⁰ He sent out his word & healed them, & delivered them from their destruction. ²¹ Let them thank the LORD for his mercy
2) God also disciplines us for our sin: **Jn. 5:13-14:** the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple & said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you."
- **1 Cor. 11:28-30:** Let a person examine himself, then, & so eat of the bread & drink of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats & drinks without discerning the body eats & drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak & ill, & some have died. **GOSPEL!**

c. If you are are child of God, all your suffering because of your own personal sin is because God loves you:
- **1 Cor. 11:31-32:** But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.
- **Heb. 12:5-6:** have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. ⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, & chastises every son whom he receives."

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3. Sometimes You Suffer Because You Follow Jesus

All of Jesus' eleven disciples suffered greatly because they followed Jesus. They were all killed, except John (he was exiled), because they followed Jesus & preached Jesus Christ & Him crucified & risen from the dead.

- **Acts 16:16-26:** As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination & brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ She followed Paul & us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." ¹⁸ & this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned & said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." & it came out that very hour. ¹⁹ But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul & Silas & dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. ²⁰ & when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, & they are disturbing our city. ²¹ They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice." ²² The crowd joined in attacking them, & the magistrates tore the garments off them & gave orders to beat them with rods. ²³ & when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. ²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison & fastened their feet in the stocks. ²⁵ About midnight Paul & Silas were praying & singing hymns to God, & the prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶ & suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. & immediately all the doors were opened, &

everyone's bonds were unfastened.

- **Rev. 6:9-11:** When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God & for the witness they had borne. ¹⁰ They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy & true, how long before you will judge & avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" ¹¹ Then they were each given a white robe & told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants & their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

4. All Suffering In The Life Of A Christian Is Suffering For Jesus

1 Cor. 10:31: So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

John Piper: In choosing to follow Christ in the way He directs, we choose all that this path includes under His sovereign providence. Thus, all suffering that comes in the path of obedience is suffering with Christ & for Christ – whether it is cancer or conflict. & it is “chosen” – that is, we willingly take the path of obedience where the suffering befalls us, & we do not murmur against God. We may pray – as Paul did – that the suffering be removed (2 Cor. 12:8); but if God wills, we embrace it in the end as part of the cost of discipleship in the path of obedience on the way to heaven. All experiences of suffering in the path of Christian obedience, whether from persecution or sickness or accident, have this in common: They all threaten our faith in the goodness of God & tempt us to leave the path of obedience. Therefore, every triumph of faith & all perseverance in obedience are testimonies to the goodness of God & the preciousness of Christ – whether the enemy is sickness, Satan, sin, or sabotage. Therefore, all suffering, of every kind, that we endure in the path of our Christian calling is a suffering “with Christ” & “for Christ.” *With Him* in the sense that the suffering comes to us as we are walking with Him by faith & in the sense that it is endured in the strength He supplies through His sympathizing high-priestly ministry (Heb. 4:15). *For Him* in the sense that the suffering tests & proves our allegiance to His goodness & power & in the sense that it reveals His worth as an all-sufficient compensation & prize.

5. God Is Completely Sovereign Over All Suffering

John Piper: It is no sin in God that He ordain that sin be. (*Is God Less Glorious Because He Ordained That Evil Be?*)

a. God is in complete control of all life, death, & disease: Deut. 32:39: There is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death & give life. I have wounded & it is I who heal, & there is no one who can deliver from My hand.

- **2 Sam. 12:15:** Then the LORD struck the child that Uriah's widow bore to David, so that he was sick . . . Then it happened on the seventh day that the child died.

- **Ex. 4:11:** Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?

b. God is in complete control of all natural disasters: Ps. 105:16: He called for a famine upon the land

- **Mk. 4:39, 41:** Even the wind & the sea obey Him.

- **Ps. 104:4:** He makes the winds His messengers, Flaming fire His ministers.

- **Ps. 135:7:** He makes lightnings for the rain, [He] brings forth the wind from His treasures.

- **Ps. 147:18; 148:8:** He causes His wind to blow & the waters to flow . . . Fire & hail, snow & clouds; Stormy wind, fulfilling His word.

c. God is in complete control of all other kinds of calamities: Isa. 45:7: The One forming light & creating darkness, Causing well-being & creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.

- **Amos 3:6:** If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it?

- **Job 42:2:** I know that You can do all things, & that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.

- **Dan. 4:35:** He [God] does according to his will in the host of heaven & among the inhabitants of the earth; & none can stay his hand or say to him, 'What are you doing?'

- **Eph. 1:11:** God is the one "who works all things after the counsel of His will."

- **Prov. 16:33:** The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.

d. God is in complete control of all moral evil: Joseph: Gen. 50:20: As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

- **Ps. 105:17:** [God] sent a man before them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave.

- **The Cross: Acts 4:27-28:** Truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod & Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles & the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand & Your purpose predestined to occur.

John Piper: God planned a history of redemption before the world existed.

- **2 Tim. 1:8-9:** Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the Gospel by the power of God, ⁹ who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began

e. God ordained all suffering for His own glory: The primary reason God does everything is for His own glory. Suffering is in the world because God gets more glory in a world where there is suffering than in a world where there is no suffering. One example of God's passion for His glory: God redeemed us for His glory: **Eph. 1:5-6, 11-14:** He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace . . . ¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory . . . ¹³ the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

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6. Jesus Endured The Greatest Suffering Of All

Jesus was stricken & smitten by God His Father on that cross! (Isa. 53:4, Zech. 13:7, Mark 14:27)

Jesus was crushed by God His Father on that cross! – & it pleased Him to do it! (Isa. 53:10)

Jesus was made a curse by God His Father on that cross! (Gal. 3:13)

Jesus was cursed by God His Father on that cross! (Gal. 3:13)

Jesus was condemned by God His Father on that cross! (Rom. 8:3)

Jesus was a propitiation for sinners on that cross! (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 4:10)

Jesus drank the cup of God's infinite wrath on that cross! (Matt. 26:39-44)

Jesus was forsaken by God His Father on that cross! (Matt. 27:46)

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7. God Means All Your Suffering For Your Good

- **Rom. 8:28-29:** And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

- **Rom. 5:3-5:** Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ & endurance produces character, & character produces hope, ⁵ & hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

- **Jas. 1:2-4:** Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ & let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Beverly Moore: 1) We're being conformed to the likeness of Christ (Rom. 8:28-29); 2) We can bring glory to God (1 Cor. 10:31); 3) We learn obedience (Ps. 119:71); 4) Our faith is being purified and proven genuine (1 Pet. 1:6-7); 5) We grow in spiritual maturity (James 1:2-4); 6) We grow in holiness, righteousness, and peace (Heb. 12:10-

11); 7) We learn to treasure the Lord rather than this world (Matt. 6:21); 8) We learn to find true comfort in God (2 Cor. 1:3-11); 9) We grow in hope (Rom. 5:1-5); 10) We're being prepared for fruitful ministry (John 12:24); 11) **John Piper:** We show the world that Jesus is better than anything we lose or never get (Ps. 63:3).

8. Someday, For All Christians, All Suffering Will End

- **Rom. 8:18:** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

- **Rev. 21:3-5, 22-27; 22:1-5:** I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, & they will be his people, & God himself will be with them as their God.

⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, & death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." ⁵ & he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." . . . ²² & I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³ & the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, & its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ By its light will the nations walk, & the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵ & its gates will never be shut by day – & there will be no night there. ²⁶ They will bring into it the glory & the honor of the nations. ²⁷ But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life . . . ^{22:1} Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God & of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God & of the Lamb will be in it, & his servants will worship him. ⁴ They will see his face, & his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ & night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, & they will reign forever & ever.

Remember when you suffer: Beverly Moore: 1) The Lord never changes (Mal. 3:6); 2) The Lord is all wise (Jer. 10:12); 3) The Lord is good (Ps. 119:69); 4) The Lord is gracious (Ps. 116:5-6); 5) The Lord is all powerful (2 Pet. 1:3); 6) The Lord is compassionate & merciful (Ps. 145:8-9); 7) The Lord is faithful (Ps. 33:4); 8) The Lord is loving (1 John 4:8); 9) I added one: The Lord Jesus suffered for you to bring you to God: **1 Pet. 3:18:** For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God . . .

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Christ Jesus Suffered Most And Best
All God's Wrath On Him Compressed
God's Angry Curse Crushed Him Oppressed
He Died Forsaken, Mocked With Jest
But Then He Rose So We Are Blessed
By Faith Alone In Him We're Dressed
So Even In Our Suffering Test
He Makes Us More Like Christ The Best
Our Momentary, Light Unrest
Works For Us Glory, Don't Protest
Far Greater Than All Pain That's Pressed
So Trust The Son! In Him Find Rest
By Him With Hope You'll Be Obsessed
He's Where We All Find Joy Possessed!