

HUMAN SUFFERING

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In creating the physical world, God made a place that is complete for what he intended. He never intended for it to be man's eternal home, but an environment wherein man could prepare for heaven (Ecc. 12:13,14; Mat. 6:33; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; 1 Cor. 15:42-49; Rev. 2:10).

Because "God is love" (1 John 4:8), he could not create man as some kind of robot without free will. In giving man a free will, he made it possible for man to make choices. However, with such ability man has made wrong decisions and choices. When man makes wrong choices he must suffer for his bad selections. Without suffering the consequences of bad choices, man does not learn to value good over bad.

Without room for much detailed discussion let us briefly note that man undergoes suffering due to:

(1) **Wrong Personal Choices:** Man is at fault when he murders, steals and rapes. Because God made man with freedom of choice, he does not stop the crime nor set aside the consequences of such sins (1 John 3:4; 1Pet. 4:15).

(2) **Wrong Personal Choices Made By Others:** When a deranged person decides to shoot as many school children as possible, such children are not suffering from anything wrong they did, but for the wrong committed by the deranged man.

(3) **Wrong Personal Choices Of Our Forefathers:** Today we reap the benefits of Pasteur, Bell and Edison. At the same time, we continue to be plagued with the Communism of Marx and Lenin.

The terrible and sad condition of the world is man's fault. In the Garden of Eden before man sinned, he was free of disease, death and all the other consequences of sin (Gen. 3:22, 23). But, when man sinned, the whole of creation was affected (Rom. 5:12; 8:18-22). Venereal diseases are examples of what happens to man when he violates God's laws in the particular area of sexual relations (Rom. 1:24-27).

There is no doubt that over the thousands of years since man's fall, many germs and viruses have mutated and, like the AIDS and swine flu viruses, made their appearance in the world. The natural catastrophes (floods, earthquakes, etc.) no doubt are the consequences of man's sin. Study closely the state of the world before and after the flood (Gen. 1:6-7; 2:5-6; 6-8). Man's sin brought forth the flood and from it the change of the features of the earth. Hence, the so-called natural catastrophes that man suffers from today are an indirect result of our sinful ancestors.

God's natural laws are constant, consistent and dependable. When we violate them innocently, ignorantly or otherwise, we suffer the consequences. How terrible it would be if man never knew whether the law of gravity was going to work or not.

Pain is an indicator for man's good. How many serious injuries are avoided because of painful warnings? Painful suffering and other kinds of trials develop the mind with the understanding that all things in this present physical world are uncertain, fleeting and will cease altogether some day (Jam. 1:1-5). The sufferings of this present world cause the wise to prepare so they will not miss heaven (Job 3:17; Rom. 8:18).

Before Jesus gave up the form of God (this does not mean he gave up being deity), he, being omniscient, knew man's plight. Yet, knowing such, he chose to give up the

form of God and take upon himself the form of man whereby he could actually experience the pain and plight of mankind. What an amazing testimony to God's love for mankind! No one can ever accuse the Lord of not understanding what it is like to actually suffer (Phi. 2:5-8; Heb. 5:8).

After days of prayer and fasting King David's child died. David did not continue mourning, but arose; and in his answer to those who questioned why, with the child's death, he did not continue mourning, he revealed the inner strength that has always characterized the faithful: "...*Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me*" (2 Sam. 12:23).

We in this life can never understand all that is involved in suffering because we do not know the whole design of God for man (Rom. 11:33-34). But we do know enough to realize that life is God's classroom, the Bible God's textbook, and, as God has designed this world and the people who live in it, a great many tests try all of us. As the apostle John said: "...*we know that the whole world lieth in wickedness*" (1 John 5:19). No matter what the situation, however, a man's duty is to do God's will; and thereby we will be abundantly sustained (1Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10; 4:11).~