



Why in the World Is There Suffering?

OUR TELEVISIONS SHOW harrowing pictures of famine and starvation in the Third World. The radio announces another international conflict on the verge of breaking out. The local newspaper carries the sad news of another life scarred by violence and abuse. Neighbours tell of friends who lost their battles with cancer. Suffering seems to be everywhere, and it raises lots of emotions and questions.

We might find ourselves wondering why bad things happen to good people, and why good things happen to bad people. After all, to many of us it makes sense that a terrorist would be killed by his own bomb. It makes sense that a reckless driver would be in a serious accident. It makes sense that a person who plays with fire would get burnt. It even makes sense that a chain-smoker would develop lung cancer.

But what about the innocent men, women, and children who are killed by that terrorist's bomb? What about the young driver who suffers severe brain damage because that drunk crashed into him? What about the person whose house burns down due to no fault of their own? And what about the 2-year-old child with leukaemia?

We may not be able to know why one person gets singled out for a disease, but we can know in part why diseases exist. Even though we may not understand why we face a certain problem, we can know how to deal with the situation and to respond in the right way.



A World of Suffering

IMAGINE A WORLD WITHOUT PAIN. What would it be like? At first, the idea may sound appealing. No more headaches, backaches, sore throats, or upset stomachs. No more throbbing sensations when the hammer misses the mark and lands on your thumb. But there would also be no more sensation to alert you to a broken bone or torn ligaments. No alarm to let you know that an ulcer is eating a hole in your stomach. No discomfort to warn of a cancerous tumour. We might not like pain, but it often serves a good purpose. It warns us

when something goes wrong. The cause of the pain, rather than the pain itself, is the real problem.

But it hasn't always been this way. When God created the world, it was perfect. No pain. No suffering. No death. Everything was in perfect balance with God in charge, and He enjoyed a close, loving relationship with Adam and Eve, the first man and woman.

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But the Bible tells us that Adam and Eve stubbornly rejected God's good rule, thinking they knew best. They disobeyed Him. They wanted to take the crown off God's head and put it on their own. The Bible calls this rebellion against God "sin". Because of sin, an idyllic world and man's perfect relationship with God were ruined. Sadly, it's an attitude that continues to this day, and we too live with the consequences of that rebellion—pain, suffering, and death.

The cause of all this misery is the disobedience of mankind, which includes Adam and Eve, us, and

everyone in-between. The problem isn't of God's making, and yet in His kindness He uses our suffering to teach us about Himself. The writer C. S. Lewis said, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts to us in our pain; it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." In that way, pain alerts us to the bigger problem wracking our planet.

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Loss, mental and emotional torment, wars, famines, and diseases all proclaim that the world is not as God made it to be.

We seem to have convinced ourselves that we have the right to good health and to live the kind of life that we

desire. Yet when faced with the anguish of suffering, we can be tempted to cry out: "It's not fair." Many people choose to openly deny God's existence, and others reject Him by quietly living their lives as if He doesn't exist. But even that very feeling of unfairness seems

to be a recognition that God exists. Nevertheless, in so many different ways, people declare that they want a world without God. So He has given us what we want—a world without His perfect rule. A world of suffering.

But the Bible tells us that God still cares about our anguish. It tells of His deep love for us, even though we seem so determined to do things our own way and to ignore Him.

So is this world of suffering all we have to look forward to?

A World Without Suffering

WE KEEP REPEATING the mistake of Adam and Eve—rejecting God as our ruler through our disobedience. We are all guilty of doing it. But God wants us to discover the real solution to our suffering. He wants us all to trust in His plan. God has promised to deal with our sin and broken relationship with Him, and His solution offers the only hope in this suffering-filled world.

So what is this hope? The last book of the Bible reveals events that are still to happen. It tells us of a time when God will restore everything back to how He intended it to be. Revelation 21:3-4 tells us:

*God's home is now among his people!
He will live with them,
and they will be his people.
God himself will be with them.
He will wipe every tear from their
eyes, and there will be no more death
or sorrow or crying or pain.
All these things are gone forever.*

Isn't that the dream we all have? We all long for a perfect world where there is no pain or suffering. But no matter what we try—whether science, politics, environmentalism, or something else—nothing can create the perfect world. Only God can do that. And in the future when He does, God will be at the centre of everything, our relationship with Him restored. That is life as it is meant to be, and it's what those who are rescued from sin can look forward to.

How Can We Be Rescued?

THE WORLD IS A MESS because of our sin. There's nothing we can do in our own power to change that. So God sent one Man to fix everything, His only Son, Jesus Christ. Putting our trust in Jesus is the means of rescue. We see this in the Bible:

*For this is how God loved the world:
He gave his one and only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him
will not perish but have eternal life.
God sent his Son into the world not
to judge the world, but to save
the world through him.
(John 3:16-17).*

The Bible tells us that when we put our trust in Jesus, we are promised eternal life. That means that when we die we will go to live with God, free from pain and free from suffering. But if we are honest with ourselves, we have to admit that we sin all the time by what we think, do, and say. So can we really be good enough for God to accept us?

God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

Romans 5:8

When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. . . . God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. (Romans 5:6-8).

In His kindness, God sent His only Son Jesus Christ to die in our place, the death we deserve. Jesus died for us “at just the right time”. Without Him, we are powerless to solve the world’s sin problem.

Jesus was not like us. He never sinned. He was the only human who never rejected God. And yet Jesus endured the most horrific pain and suffering imaginable. He took that punishment for us. He was rejected, beaten, stripped, whipped, mocked, stabbed, and crucified—for our sins. He willingly died on the cross to pay the penalty for our disobedience so that we would not have to. As we’ve just read, “Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners.”

What a price to pay! Jesus Christ laid down His life for people like you and me. But the story didn’t stop at the tomb. The Bible tells us Jesus rose from death. He overcame death for all who put their trust in Him.

That is why we should trust in Jesus. When we do, we put Him in charge of our lives, the barrier created by our sin is removed, and we have a restored personal relationship with God. We can have that wonderful future we read about earlier. No more tears. No more death. No more mourning. No more crying. No more pain.

Think back to how we started. This world can be a place of great joy, but it is marred by suffering and pain at every turn. We long to escape from it and will try many things to do so. But only the promises and work of God can ever give any certainty of escape.

God's power and promises turn everything we know upside now. We know that we'll all have painful seasons in our lives, and that one day we will die. Nothing is more certain than that. And yet God promises something different: a life of peace, joy, and happiness with Him that never ends!

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And what do we contribute to that world? We bring nothing; it's all on God's initiative. And so we are faced with the only real option: to trust in God's solution.

As you've been reading this, you may have realised that you have never put Jesus at the centre of your life. It may be that you have never looked at the world in this way before. Perhaps the Bible's diagnosis of this world's suffering has

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struck you as true. You might want to start putting Jesus at the centre today.

If so, the words of the following prayer will help you to do so. If you pray it sincerely, it's a new beginning. This

is the start of your life as a Christian; and it's the right way to live now and the only way to live in that promised world that will be free from tears, death, mourning, dying, and pain.

This prayer simply admits that we have rejected God. It also thanks Him for the love He shows us in Jesus, and

asks for His help to trust Him every day. It's easy to do, but it's also the biggest decision you will ever make:

Dear God,

I know that I have not lived my life trusting in You, and that in my own strength I cannot do anything to rebuild the relationship I've broken with You.

Thank You for loving me so much. Thank You for sending Your Son to die on the cross to pay the penalty for my sin.

With Your help I now put my faith in You, and I trust in Jesus Christ as my rescuer. I want to stop living my own way, and instead want to let You take control of my life. Please help me to do this.

Honestly acknowledging our sin and trusting Jesus' rescue puts us in the relationship with God that we were made for. And what a privilege that is!

The Christian life is a small glimpse of what God's new world will be like in the future. Christians can rely on the promise of an everlasting future with God, as we saw in Revelation 21:3-4. For those who trust God, any pain and suffering in this life is only a temporary

thing, compared to the eternity ahead of us. There will be a day in the future when we are pain free, suffering free, and living in a restored perfect world.

Being a Christian doesn't mean that we won't have pain and suffering in the meantime, but God will give us strength to cope. The Christian life will not always be easy, but we can, through prayer, ask for God's help each day. We can live for Him now, and look forward to the day when God's promises of a new world are realised—when there will be no more death, no more mourning, no more crying, and no more pain.

It may be that you want to learn more about the claims of the Bible and how you can live for God now. If you would like to do that, you can use the attached reply slip to ask for some resources to be sent to you directly.

You can also check us out online at **www.ourdailybread.org** to see the many other printed and digital resources available.

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