

The Purposes of Suffering

Why does God allow suffering?

We are called to see suffering as a part of life meant to dissatisfy us with the present fallen world and to instill in us a longing for eternity. **Four main aspects of suffering:**

1) Suffering as a Consequence of Sin

Suffering is a product of the fall, a consequence of human sin against God

Romans 5:12(KJV)

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned

Romans 2:12-15 (TLB)

He will punish sin wherever it is found. He will punish the heathen when they sin, even though they never had God's written laws, for down in their hearts they know right from wrong. God's laws are written within them; their own conscience accuses them, or sometimes excuses them. And God will punish the Jews for sinning because they have his written laws but don't obey them. They know what is right but don't do it. After all, salvation is not given to those who know what to do, unless they do it.

Romans 6:23 (Niv)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Some suffering is due to our sinful and wrong choices, but some is due simply to the world being fallen

2) Suffering as a Tool of Sanctification

Nothing forces a person to confront their true self like suffering. Suffering causes our focus to turn inward, to face those parts of ourselves we might otherwise ignore. God can use suffering then to develop us into better people

Romans 5:3-5 (NIV)

3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

3) Suffering as a Test of Faith

Suffering reveals whether our faith is a mere childish hope or a factual reality.

1 Corinthians 13:11 (KJV)

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

When we are burdened beyond our strength, we must not become bitter but instead allow our faith to make us better

James 1:2-4 (Kjv)

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (KJV)

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

4) Suffering for the purpose of sharing Christ Suffering

Romans 8:17 (NIV)

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we **share in his sufferings** in order that we may also share in his glory.

Philippians 1:29 (Kjv)

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, **not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;**