

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **1Peter 4:12-16**.
- B. Bad things happen to good people. Even more interesting is that good things happen to bad people.
- C. A very difficult subject because we all suffer. Many times we ask, "Why?" or "Why me?"

I. SOME DANGERS ASSOCIATED WITH SUFFERING.

- A. Some people believe that Xians will not suffer. Yet, this is not taught in the Bible:
 - 1. Those who believe Xians will not suffer will question God's concern for man or God's goodness.
 - 2. No guarantee is given that Xians will not suffer:
 - a. Xians have physical bodies which are subject to suffering and death (Rom 8:18).
For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.
 - b. The NT teaches that Xians will suffer (1Pet. 4:12-16).
*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; **13** but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. **14** If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. **15** Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; **16** but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.*
 - 3. God's guarantee is that He will not desert us, nor allow us to be tempted (tried) beyond our ability to endure (Heb. 13:5-6; 1Cor. 10:13).
*(Heb 13:5-6) Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," **6** so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT SHALL MAN DO TO ME?"*
(1Cor 10:13) No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.
- B. A bad reaction to suffering includes feelings of:
 - 1. Uselessness.
 - 2. Self-pity.
 - 3. Worthlessness.
 - 4. Failure to use one's life in service to God due to bitterness.
- C. Suffering can even lead a person to rejection of God:
 - 1. "This is destroying my faith" (grip the knife by the handle not the blade).
 - 2. The problem of "unanswered prayers" (God in His wisdom says "no" or "wait").
- D. But suffering should help us see our lack of self-sufficiency, and see our need for God.

II. SOME CAUSES OF SUFFERING.

- A. Some suffering is because of sin ("**the way of the transgressor is hard**", Prov. 13:15). This suffering is a result of man's free will; we must live with the consequences of our choices (actions).
- B. But not all suffering is punishment for sin.
 - 1. Jesus gives two examples of suffering not associated with sin (Lk. 13:1-5).
*Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. **2** And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were *greater* sinners than all *other* Galileans because they suffered this *fate*? **3** I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. **4** Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were *worse* culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? **5** I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."*

2. The man born blind was not a result of sin (Jn. 9:1-3).
As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. **2** And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" **3** Jesus answered, "*It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.*"
3. Job was a righteous man whom God allowed to endure suffering (see Job 1:6-2:10).
- C. Some suffering is because of the nature of our physical world:
 1. This world is not our permanent home or a hedonistic paradise.
 2. The functioning of natural laws sometimes brings suffering:
 - a. Natural calamities (tornado, earthquake, etc.) are all morally blind.
 - b. Illness, disease, poison are also morally blind.
- D. Since this life will end in death some suffering will be necessary (this makes death a blessing because if there was no death, we would suffer forever...).
- E. The randomness of suffering (some people suffer much while others suffer little) is necessary; otherwise people would not serve God for the right reasons. They would not serve Him out of love, but out of selfishness--so as not to suffer. We are not to serve God just so that we will not suffer.

III. SOME SUGGESTIONS TO HELP IN TIME OF TROUBLE.

- A. Some of our physical suffering could be greatly reduced by:
 1. Eating the right foods, and getting some exercise.
 2. More education on a matter.
- B. Some of our emotional suffering could be greatly reduced or eliminated by:
 1. Training the heart in areas of godliness.
 2. Listening to a rational presentation of a problem rather than grasping to an impulsive answer.
- C. Some of our spiritual suffering could be greatly reduced by:
 1. Knowing what the NT says about sin.
 2. Focusing on living as Jesus did; a life in perfect harmony with God and man.
- D. Remember that God cares about our misfortune and chooses to involve Himself in them:
(Ex.: story of man who drown after 2 boats and helicopter tried to save him)
 1. Future glory after suffering (Rom. 8:16-18).
The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, **17** and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.
18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.
 2. There will be a release from the present situation of suffering (Rom. 8:20-23).
For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope **21** that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. **22** For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. **23** And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.
 3. The Spirit of God intercedes, knowing our weaknesses (Rom. 8:26).
In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words;
 4. God wants good to happen in our lives (Rom. 8:28).
And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.
 5. Nothing can separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:31-32, 35).
What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? **32** He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?... **35** Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. Trying to understand why man suffers is an age old question that is difficult to answer. Instead of God giving us one all encompassing answer we see that life on the earth is a proving ground to see how we react to suffering in our preparation for eternal things.
- B. "Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?" I don't know! But there is one thing I do know--the question of victory is not IF, but WHEN (Heb. 2:14-15).
*Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; **15** and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.*
- C. Jesus Christ holds the victory over suffering, the devil, sin, and death:
 - 1. When I suffer I need to read Romans 8.
 - 2. When I suffer I need to draw close to God.
 - 3. When I suffer I need to realize that the ultimate victory is assured.
- D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.