

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Scripture text: **Hebrews 2:14-18.**

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. [16] For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. [17] Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. [18] For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.



B. Romans, chapter 8 declares that the entire creation suffers (plants, animals, and humans). We live in an imperfect world.

C. But if God is all-good (and He is) we sometimes ask "why do we have to suffer?"

D. This lesson is about suffering and the Xian response to it.

II. WHY HUMANS SUFFER.



A. First, we suffer because of our sin.

1. The garden of Eden is no more. But the magnitude of our suffering is not proportional to our sin. Natural laws now in effect cause us to suffer (gravity, weather, germs, etc.).

2. Consider the following:

a. The way of the transgressor is hard (Prov. 13:15).

Good understanding produces favor, But the way of the treacherous is hard.

b. God is merciful in dealing with mankind (Psa. 103:10,11).

He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. [11] For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.

c. Not all suffering is due to sin (Jn. 9:1-3).

And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. [2] And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" [3] Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him.

d. Natural calamity is morally blind (Lk. 13:1-5).

Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. [2] And He answered and 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."



B. Second, we suffer because we have been given a choice.

1. Man is a creature of volition and we will make bad decisions. Natural laws and man's freedom of choice means that some suffering is inevitable when man tries to violate these laws.

2. Consider the following:

a. The way that seems right is often wrong (Prov. 14:12).

There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

b. It is not within man to direct his own life (Jer. 10:23).

I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself; Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.



C. Third, we suffer because of God's discipline.

1. God is actively working in our life, and this means His discipline from time to time.

2. God disciplined the great leaders of His people; Moses, David, and Peter. God allowed Israel to suffer because it was His way of disciplining them to make them better people.

3. Consider the following:
 - a. All discipline is painful--we suffer in it (Heb. 12:10,11).
For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us for our good*, that we may share His holiness. [11] All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.
 - b. Jesus died to free us from some suffering (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.



D. Fourth, we suffer because Satan is in the world.

1. Satan is going about sowing bad seed in the lives of people. We can suffer because of what other people do to us. He loves pain, suffering, and agony. Temptation is always a problem that can lead to suffering if we give in to it.
 2. Consider the following:
 - a. Satan is at work against those who are doing good (Mt. 13:25,28).
“But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away... [28] “And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ And the slaves said^ to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’”
 - b. Jesus allowed Satan to work on Peter (Lk. 22:31).
“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you like wheat;
 - c. God allowed Satan to work on Job (Job 1:7-12).
And the LORD said to Satan, “From where do you come?” Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.” [8] And the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.” [9] Then Satan answered the LORD, “Does Job fear God for nothing? [10] “Hast Thou not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. [11] “But put forth Thy hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse Thee to Thy face.” [12] Then the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.” So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.
- E. These 4 things are not exhaustive. But hopefully they help to categorize some areas/concerns of life that cause us to suffer.

III A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO SUFFERING.



A. First, we need to remember that God suffers too.

1. Our God is a suffering God. He knows and feels our pain. He can understand our suffering through the suffering of X. We can even learn things (otherwise not known) through our suffering.
 - a. In our affliction, God is afflicted (Isa. 63:9a).
In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the angel of His presence saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them; And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old.
 - b. The suffering Savior (Isa. 53:3-7).
He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. [4] Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. [5] But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. [6] All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. [7] He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.
 - c. Jesus was made to suffer and now understands (Heb. 2:18; 4:15).
(Heb 2:18) For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

(Heb 4:15) For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are, yet* without sin.

d. Jesus learned obedience in His suffering--we should too (Heb. 5:8).

(Heb 5:8) Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.

 B. Second, we may need to **change our concept of God**.

1. If our concept of a God is one that says "He is all-powerful and we should never therefore suffer" we need to change that attitude. Job and Habakkuk learned that lesson the hard way.

2. God can cause all things, good and bad, to work together for our good.

3. Consider the following:

a. God says, "My ways and thoughts are higher than yours" (Isa. 55:9).

"For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

b. The secret things belong to God (Deut. 29:29).

"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

c. All things, good and bad, can be for our good (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.

 C. Third, we may need **a better understanding of God's will**.

1. It is not God's will that people have tragedy in their life. But God can use that tragedy to serve His purposes. What we perceive as being good and bad may not necessarily be so in God's sight.

2. Tragedy can cause, us to learn things we wouldn't have learned any other way.

3. Consider the following:

a. A man was born blind to show how God could work in his life (see Jn. 9:1-3).

b. Give thanks in all things, it's God's will at work in your life (1Th. 5:18).

in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

 D. Fourth, we need to **know that suffering builds character**.

1. In a similar point to the one above, there are good things that come out of our suffering.

2. Consider the following:

a. We receive perseverance, character and hope (Rom. 5:3-5).

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; [4] and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; [5] and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

b. The greatness of the blessing of suffering for Christ (1Pet. 4:12-16,19; Rom. 8:16,17).

(Rom 8:16,17) The Spirit Himself bears witness 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* in order that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

(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 upon you. [15] By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; [16] but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.

(1Pet 4:19) Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

c. Endurance means maturity in all things (Jas. 1:2-4).

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, [3] knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. [4] And let endurance have *its* perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

-  E. Fifth, we need to ask HOW not why.
1. God is not obligated to tell us WHY we are suffering. Therefore, our prayer to God should be to ask God HOW we can cope, and WHAT can we learn from our suffering.
 2. God is the God of all comfort (2Cor. 1:4).
who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

IV. CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

-  A. I can't answer the WHY question. I'm not even going to try.
- B. Things to remember from the lesson:
1. God suffers when we suffer.
 2. God still loves us and cares for us during our suffering.
 3. God ultimately causes all things (good and bad) to work together for good.
 4. God can cause our suffering to build character and maturity.
 5. God is the God of all comfort.
- C. Jesus said to come if you are suffering. Weak and heavy laden? Come to Jesus for rest.
- D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.