

God Helps with Your Troubles:

Bible Solutions for Problems, Suffering, and Hardship

Everyone has troubles. We face problems, affliction, suffering, and hardship. We need strength, endurance, and patience. Why do people suffer? Are all trials the result of sin committed by the one who suffers? Why does God allow trials, worries, anxieties, and difficulties? Should we blame God and turn from Him? Can troubles and suffering actually make us better people? Is it possible to faithfully endure our difficulties? What solutions does the Bible offer to help us endure and overcome our problems, afflictions, and hardships?

Introduction:

"Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble" (Job 14:1). We can especially appreciate these words when we think of the suffering endured by the one who spoke them. Different people deal with different problems and afflictions, and it seems that some suffer more hardships than others do. But we all know by personal experience and from the experiences of those we know, that Job's statement is true.

Troubles concern us, not just because hardship itself is a burden, but also because affliction can lead to spiritual temptations. We may be tempted to feel that our trials justify committing sin. We may become so discouraged that we blame God for our troubles, lose faith in Him, or begin to doubt His goodness and mercy. As Job's wife said, "Curse God and die" (Job 2:9).

The purpose of this study is to offer Bible answers to questions people often ask about suffering. Why do people suffer? Can good come from suffering? Is it possible to endure affliction with patience and faithfulness? How can God give us strength to endure our hardships and overcome our temptations? What does the Bible say?

Why Do People Suffer?

There are several reasons, not just one reason, why people suffer.

Sometimes people suffer as a result of their sins.

King Saul lived a miserable life and eventually was slain because he had rebelled against God (1 Chronicles. 10:13,14).

Judas killed himself because he had betrayed Jesus (Matthew 27:3-5).

Likewise today, alcoholics may develop disease, thieves may be imprisoned, etc.

Some people think this is the only reason people ever suffer, but we will see that it is not.

Sometimes innocent people suffer as a result of other people's sins.

This may result from cruelty or accident, as when innocent bystanders are killed by a drunken driver. or when a thief violently attacks his victims.

In other cases wicked people may harm righteous people because they resent them. This kind of religious persecution is described in many verses.

1 Peter 2:19-23 - Jesus is an example of one who committed no sin at all, yet He was persecuted and killed by wicked men. So we may follow His example and suffer, not for our faults, but when we do good.

John 15:18-20 - The treatment Jesus received should warn us of the treatment we can expect. The world hated Him and persecuted Him, and it will do the same to His servants.

2 Corinthians 11:23-26 - Paul's life shows that Jesus' followers truly often are persecuted.

2 Timothy 3:10-12 - All who live godly in Christ shall suffer persecution.

We are blessed when suffering for Christ

1 Peter 4:12-17 "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?"

All people suffer as a result of Adam and Eve's sin.

God originally placed Adam and Eve in a state of bliss with no problems of any kind. But He warned them of the consequences of sin. When they sinned anyway, He decreed they would endure pain, suffering, hardship, and eventual death (Genesis. 3:16-19). All people since that time have endured these same problems. In particular, because of Adam, all people die (1 Corinthians. 15:22;).

Much of the suffering people endure, therefore, cannot be attributed to any particular sin committed by anyone now living. It is just the common lot of mankind because sin is in the world.

This does not mean, as some teach, that people today are born guilty of Adam's sin or will be eternally punished for it. But we do suffer in *this* life because of it.

Some suffering is simply a temptation from Satan.

Job 1:1-2:10 expressly states that Job's suffering was a temptation from Satan. He hoped that, because he was suffering, Job would turn away from God.

Many other passages teach that Satan is responsible for the suffering of other people 2 Corinthians 12:7, "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Lessons We Should Learn

Suffering is not limited to those who are wicked.

Some people think that only wicked people suffer, but God is on the side of the righteous and will remove all their troubles. It follows that, if a person is suffering, he must have committed some sin he should repent of.

This was the theory of Job's friends (Job 4:7-9); disproving this idea is a main theme of that book. This same false doctrine is taught by many "faith healers" who teach people that God must remove all their problems if they are right with Him.

But we have learned that even righteous people suffer. This is important for the following reasons:

* We should not conclude that we have been guilty of sin every time we have a problem. *Maybe* we are suffering because of sin, so we should examine our lives. But maybe we are suffering for other reasons, perhaps because we are righteous.

* We should surely never reject a Bible teaching just because it may lead to suffering. If all suffering was the result of our own sin, and if a course of action led to suffering, then we would conclude it was a sinful act. But we have learned that godly people often suffer for doing right.

* We should not become believers thinking it will automatically solve all our problems. If this is our motive, we may fall away when the hardships come.

But the main lesson to learn is the next point:

God should not be blamed for the existence of suffering.

If we believe that all suffering results from a person's own sin, and if we see good people suffering, we may be tempted to blame God or to think He is not keeping His promises. But we have learned that all people suffer, whether or not they are righteous.

The command to endure suffering is just another part of a believers life, like the command to study the Bible, pray, worship, etc. Faithful believers of all ages have suffered; we are not the only ones. We should expect suffering to come, so our faith will not be shaken when it does.

The ultimate and primary blame for suffering rests on *Satan* who tempts people to sin and thereby brought sin into the world. The secondary blame rests upon *people*, ourselves included, who have given in to temptation and committed sin that led to suffering.

Yes, God did create suffering as a punishment for sin, but only after He had given people a life without problems and had warned them of the consequences of sin. When they chose to sin, He should no more be blamed for punishing them than a parent should be blamed when he must punish a rebellious child. (James 1:13,15.)

Remember, if you blame God and reject Him because you are suffering, then ***you are doing exactly what Satan wants you to do***. He has defeated you! The only way to defeat Satan and really overcome hardship is to maintain your faithfulness to God in spite of the suffering.