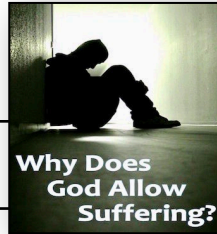


Why Does God Allow Suffering?



"O God, why have you rejected us so long? Why is your anger so intense against the sheep of your own pasture?"
Psalm 74:1 NLT

- *When have you questioned why an all-powerful loving God would allow sin and suffering?*

Psalm 74 is an ancient Hebrew song of worship. The theme is the question - **why is God letting His people suffer?** The psalmist is appealing to God to intervene and rescue Israel from her agony.

This psalm is attributed to **Asaph** as the author. This is not the Asaph who directed the worship in the Temple in David's reign (1 Chron. 16:4-7). This had to be a descendant named after him. Bible teacher, Warren Wiersbe, wrote, "Psalm 74 moves to the national scene and focuses on the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587-86 BC. The author is obviously not the Asaph of David's day but a namesake among his descendants."

Central Lesson:

God has reasons for allowing suffering, but He has promised a day of Christ's return when it will all end.

1. Sometimes God Uses Suffering to **DISCIPLINE** Disobedience.

"1 O God, why have you rejected us so long? Why is your anger so intense against the sheep of your own pasture? 2 Remember that we are the people you chose long ago, the tribe you redeemed as your own special possession! And remember Jerusalem, your home here on earth." NLT

Psalm 74 is clear that God was upset with Israel and that He was disciplining them. Jerusalem and the temple were in ruins (74:3). The temple had been burned to the ground (74:7). The unidentified attacking army was totally destroying Jerusalem (74:8).

When did this devastation take place? *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* explains, "... The historical event to which this refers is uncertain. The only occasion that matches this devastation is the invasion by the Babylonians in 586 B.C...." (p. 848).

2. Sometimes God Uses Suffering to Teach Us That **CHOICES** Have Consequences.

"9 We no longer see your miraculous signs. All the prophets are gone, and no one can tell us when it will end. 10 How long, O God, will you allow our enemies to insult you? Will you let them dishonor your name forever? 11 Why do you hold back your strong right hand? Unleash your powerful fist and destroy them." NLT

Galatians 6:7-8 *"7 Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. 8 Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit."* NLT

God had warned Israel for years that judgment was coming if they did not turn from their immoral and pagan sinfulness. The last of the Prophets was Jeremiah who prophesied that the Babylonians would be allowed by God to conquer them and lead them into captivity for 70 years (Jer.21:4-5; 25:2-14; 29:10-14).

Jeremiah 25:7, *"7 But you would not listen to me," says the Lord. "You made me furious by worshiping idols you made with your own hands, bringing on yourselves all the disasters you now suffer."* NLT

Jeremiah 25:10 *"10 This is what the Lord says: 'You will be in Babylon for seventy years. But then I will come and do for you all the good things I have promised, and I will bring you home again.'" NLT*

The Life Application Study Bible explains, "God's anger against Israel had grown hot during the many years of their sin and idolatry. His patience endured for generations, but at last it was set aside for judgment..." (74:1,2).

3. Sometimes God Uses Suffering to Grow Our **CHARACTER**.

James 1:3-4 *"3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing."* NLT

Romans 5:3-4 *"3 We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. 4 And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation."* NLT

The Life Application Study Bible explains, "For first-century Christians, suffering was the rule rather than the exception. Paul tells us that in the future we will *become*, but until then we must *overcome*. This means we will experience difficulties that help us grow. We rejoice in suffering, not because we like pain or deny its tragedy, but because we know God is using life's difficulties and Satan's attacks to build our character..." (Rom. 5:3-4).

4. Sometimes God Uses Suffering to Increase Our **REALIZATION** That There Is Nothing As Important As God's Love, Grace, and Plan of Salvation.

Suffering is temporary. God's love, grace, and salvation are eternal.

Romans 8:18 *"18 Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later."* NLT

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 *"17 For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! 18 So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever."* NLT

The Life Application Study Bible adds, "Our ultimate hope when we are experiencing terrible illness, persecution, or pain is the realization that this life is not all there is—there is life after death! Knowing that we live forever with God in a place without sin and suffering can help us live above the pain that we face in this life.

Central Lesson:

God has reasons for allowing suffering, but He has promised a day of Christ's return when it will all end.

- ▶ Accept Christ as your Savior. ▶ As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ.
- ▶ Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ▶ Attend a small group. ▶ Read the Bible this week & journal meaningful verses. ▶ Pray for friends that need Jesus.