

MAKING SENSE OUT OF SUFFERING

Job 5:6 *Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground;
7 Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.*

INTRO.: A. Our text says it all: There is no escaping trouble, trial, sickness, affliction, disease or death in this world. Believers are not exempt (or getting saved would provide an unfair advantage and people would be lined up to do so). But suffering has a different meaning for the saved and may provide a ministry for them, whereas suffering is often totally valueless for the unsaved. And believers can make sense out of suffering while the unsaved have no explanation.

B. There are obvious differences as to how suffering may occur even though the results may be the same.

ILLUS.: Someone is shot in their own home. Maybe it was suicide. Perhaps it was an accident while cleaning a gun. It might have been murder. It could have been stupidity (thinking the gun wasn't loaded & pointing it at someone). Maybe the firing mechanism was defective. Perhaps the safety didn't function. Many possible explanations, but the person is still dead! Suffering is like that. There may be many reasons people suffer, but the pain is just as real. Let's look at some possibilities in an attempt at **"MAKING SENSE OUT OF SUFFERING..."**

I. SUFFERING DUE TO THE CURSE:

Genesis 3:14 *And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: 15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. 16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. 17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. 18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; 19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

A. Of course this is the Ultimate Explanation for All Suffering.

ILLUS.: If our original parents hadn't fallen for the Serpent's twisted temptation, we would never step on a thorn, there would be no snowstorms, tornadoes, etc., we wouldn't need to wear clothing, we would never sneeze, sniffle or get sick. We would never lose a loved one, nor would we ever die. We wouldn't have to swat mosquitoes, avoid snakes or wild animals and we would never even stub our toes. We would never have to see a doctor, attend a funeral, or mourn anyone's suffering or death. We would never get a wart, have a worry or be exposed to wickedness, warfare or terrorism.

The devil may not be directly responsible for all our trials and troubles, but we can blame him for being the ultimate source of all our sadness and suffering. But although that is a truth we cannot avoid, there are other more specific causes for suffering.

II. SUFFERING DUE TO PERSONAL SIN:

Romans 6:23 *"For the wages of sin is death..."*

A. All Sin Involves Suffering (But all suffering is not the direct result of our personal sin):

1. It may be the result of the cumulative effect of sin in the world.

ILLUS.: A woman contracts a disease through no personal fault of her own and passes it on to her unborn baby. Neither the mother nor the baby have sinned to produce this heartache, but perhaps both will have to suffer throughout life.

John 9:1-3 *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. 2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? 3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

2. Apparently this man was born blind for God's greater purposes.

B. All Sin Has Consequences:

1. Sin always breeds death...of character, reputation, spirituality, testimony, health and ultimately life itself!

James 1:15 *Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*

2. Sin also breeds corruption...of morals, values, judgment, discernment and personality.

Galatians 6:8 *For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*

NOTE: Sin always corrupts us and ultimately kills us! We cannot escape the inexorable law that what we sow, we will reap. Be sure your sin will find you out! *One way to avoid suffering is to avoid sin!!*

III. SUFFERING DUE TO NEGLIGENCE:

James 4:17 *Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*

A. We Pay the Price When We Fail to do Right:

1. Doing wrong (sin) always results in suffering for us and oftentimes for others as well.
2. Not doing right (sin) also results in suffering.

ILLUS.: Drinking can lead to cirrhosis of the liver. But failing to keep clean can lead to all kinds of health problems. As believers our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, thus we pay a price for not doing what we know we should be doing. The principle is that we pay the price for not doing what we know we should be doing. If we should be in church or witnessing or passing out tracts, etc. and that is *where we should be*, then *we are where we shouldn't be* doing what we shouldn't be and that compounds the sin.

We can also suffer spiritually when we neglect spiritual maintenance. Daily prayer and Bible reading and study can help us avoid spiritual failure and its consequences.

B. Doing Right Will Keep Us from Doing Wrong!

IV. SUFFERING DUE TO DISEASE:

John 11:3 *Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he (Lazarus) whom thou lovest is sick.*

A. The Lord's Beloved Are Not Exempt from Sickness:

1. Bodies break down, germs invade us, we get weak, sick and die!
2. The *Law of Entropy is active for the saint as well as the sinner. (**Everything wears out, breaks down and dies.*)
3. It rains on the just and the unjust.

NOTE: Mostly believers suffer simply because they are human and not because they are believers or sinners. My wife suffered for the last 10 to 12 years of her life with horrendous pain. She went from a cane, to a walker, to a Rollator, to a scooter, to a wheelchair. For several years she was on oxygen 24/7. I saw her as one of the best Christians I have ever known and I lived with her for nearly 50 years and I would not wish her pain on anyone. Rarely did she ever complain and she continued to play our church piano up until the last year of her life, and *rarely ever missed a church service*. She has been in Heaven now for the last two years and I hope I am standing nearby at the Judgment Seat of Christ to help her carry the rewards she can't handle on her own. (I miss her every day!)

B. Many Believers Suffer at the Hands of the Unsaved:

1. The Apostles all suffered due to persecution as have the martyrs through the ages.
2. The good news is that if we suffer for doing right we will be rewarded at the Judgment Seat.

NOTE: Read through Hebrews 11 sometimes and see what the saints listed there endured for Christ's sake...*for doing right!*

V. SUFFERING DUE TO ACCIDENTS:

Luke 13:1-5 *There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? 3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

A. Natural Disasters Happen to God's People Too:

1. When the Tower of Siloam fell and killed or injured 18 people it was not God's judgment upon men, saints or sinners, it was merely an accident.
2. Being in the wrong place at the wrong time may injure you or kill you.
3. Believers are not exempt, unless God specifically exempts them.

ILLUS.: If you got on the wrong flight on 9-11, whether you were saved or lost, you would have died! You may be involved in a head on collision in your car because someone does something stupid, like heading the wrong way on I-95 or because they are drunk. Or someone may shoot you when you are shopping in a Mall. Wearing a mask will not protect you from COVID-19 nor will "social distancing" or even locking yourself in your own home if you are otherwise infected.

By the way, sitting at home to watch church services, unless you CANNOT attend is no excuse to disobey the Scriptures where God says "**not forsaking the assembling of ourselves, as the manner of some is...**" Sipping coffee on your couch in your pajamas in front of a screen does not qualify!

One thing is certain...if you are in the center of God's will you are safe until He is finished with you! You may suffer, but you cannot die until He permits it or orders it. If you DO suffer within His will it can be used to His glory and your reward.

VI. SUFFERING DUE TO CHASTENING:

Hebrews 12:6 *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

A. God's Love Demands Chastening:

1. God doesn't want to raise rebellious brats!
2. God must chasten His children to enable us to grow and be disciplined and mature
3. God's love is revealed in His chastening just as parents chastening does for his or her children.
 - a. Our Heavenly Father doesn't chasten the devil's children.
 - b. This explains why the ungodly often get away with their sin and rebellion down here.

NOTE: Hopefully you understand as you matured in your life to be glad your parents chastened you when you did wrong. You may have resented it at the time, but later you realized that they did so because of their love for you. (*I am not talking about abusive punishment!*)

Hebrews 12:11 *Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. 12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees 13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.*

VII. SUFFERING DUE TO GOD'S WILL:

A. Suffering for Doing Right!

1. This may involve physical punishment from God's enemies for standing up for the Lord (like the Apostles and martyrs over the centuries).

Revelation 20:4 *And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*

2. It may mean ridicule from co-workers, harassment by a boss, getting fired from a position, ostracism by friends and rejection by loved ones and family members.
3. It may include suffering so God may be glorified.

John 11:4 *When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*

John 11:40 *(After Lazarus' resurrection) Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?*

John 9:1 *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. 2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? 3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

CONCL.: I hope that these reasons for suffering will help you to **MAKE SENSE OUT OF YOUR SUFFERING!** We need to realize that unless it is personal sin or neglect, we have absolutely no control over our suffering whatever form it may take. Thus we must learn to trust God's judgment and His dealings with us as His children.