

Why All the Pain and Suffering?

Lesson 4

Class Goals:

- To gain a biblical perspective on suffering in the world
- To better understand the character of God
- To respond practically to suffering around us in a Christ-like manner

Review:

- All of humanity is born into sin because of our sin nature. This makes God's judgment fair. However, suffering is not necessarily a result of an individual's sin.
- The Philosophical Problem of Evil:

(G) There exists a God who is all-good, all-powerful, and all-knowing.

(E) Evil Exists

(MP) An all-good, all-powerful, all-knowing God would have no good reason for allowing evil

- The Logical Problem of Evil states: (G) and (E) are inconsistent
 - o If so, what kind of inconsistency? What's missing?
- The Evidential Problem of Evil states: The probability of (G), given (E), is very low
 - o Why would that be true? Is there other evidence to consider?
- (MP) response: in order to prove it true, one would have to know not only all possible reasons for allowing evil but also that each of those possible reasons is not a good one.
- There are two responses to the problem of evil that explain why God might allow evil
 - o The Free-will defense says that the possibility of choosing evil is necessary for true choice and free will to be available to humanity, and we would not know God's character without it.
 - o The Soul-making defense says that our character is forged in the fires of difficulty, and that we are able to grow in character through it in ways that would be impossible without suffering; it draws us closer to God

1. Read Matthew 5:43-45 and 7:24-27. What do these verses tell us about who will go through suffering while on earth? What does this teach us about our expectations regarding suffering?
2. How did Paul respond to his own suffering in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10? What does this teach us about our response to suffering in our lives?

3. Is it okay for a believer to mourn death, or should we approach it as an inevitability that shouldn't bother us? Read the following verses to help shape your opinion on death and mourning, as a believer.

1 Corinthians 15:26

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

Ecclesiastes 3:4

Romans 12:15

4. Read John 11:17-37, about Jesus' response to the death of Lazarus. What do we learn about how to respond to suffering based on how Jesus responded to both Martha and Mary?

“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains; it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world”

-C.S. Lewis

For more study:

How Long, O Lord? by D. A. Carson