

### WHY Does God Allow Suffering?

Probably the biggest question that most Christians simply can't answer is WHY, if there IS a God, would He permit such suffering as we see all around us? Why would a LOVING God permit WAR, and heartache, and pain and misery? Why would He permit hunger, broken homes, and genocide? WHY?

Many atheists say plainly that any being who would do such a thing has no right to be worshipped! And THOSE ATHEISTS ARE RIGHT! Any God who would cause such things DESERVES HATRED, not worship! So does He? Is God to blame for these things? If God is at fault, we should know about it!

God is all-powerful, everyone knows. It is certain that He COULD prevent such unhappiness if He chose, but we see all around us plain evidence that God DOES allow suffering – so HOW can He claim to be a LOVING God, and permit so much evil to happen in His domain?? WHY does God allow suffering??

This lesson will give you that answer. But to begin with, we have to ask the simple question of how God *could* prevent it. Sure, we know He's all powerful but He still has to DO certain things to make certain things happen; so HOW could God prevent suffering? Exactly WHAT would He have to do, in order to change it?

Stop at this point, put down the lesson before reading on, and honestly consider the question. Give God solutions, not problems. If you want Him to fix the world's ills, you need to have considered how He'd have to do it. How could God prevent suffering?

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Now that you've thought about it, what have you come up with? Suppose God were to magically destroy all nuclear weapons, guns, and tanks, would that stop the wars? Surely not! Man was killing his fellow man long before guns were invented. If he can't use guns, he'll use knives – if those are taken away, he'll use wooden spears, clubs, rocks, and if nothing else is available he'll use his teeth.

So if God were to destroy the weapons of mankind, wars would still happen. Fewer might be hurt, but many would still die. So what if God were to kill all the "bad guys" who cause wars? Whom would He kill? Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin? What about the generals who fought for them? What about those who put them in power? Or what about the enlisted men who fought for them – those who supported Hitler and cheered his name? Are they "bad guys" too?

What about the people who feed, clothe, and support an evil empire? Regardless of what Western propaganda teaches, many Soviets preferred – and still prefer – Communism. Are they to blame for genocides and wars just as much, or even more, than Stalin? And if so, must God kill them too? It's easy to see that very few are completely innocent of the cause of war, and so to prevent wars by killing those to blame, God must kill more than the wars themselves would kill!

So clearly, none of these is a real solution. So where else could we look for a solution to war? Suppose God were to bless the Earth with an abundance of food, wealth, and money. Would they live in peace then? History shows that the wealthier the people, the more they start wars; it has always been the richest nations

that were imperialistic because there is never *enough* money! And the less people have to work, the more time they have to bicker and feud and want what belongs to someone else!

So if God's blessing wouldn't work, what else remains? How else COULD God stop wars? How else COULD God end human suffering? The only way to solve it is to strike at the ROOT of the problem – at the CAUSE of wars and suffering! And there begins the lesson!

## LESSON 2: WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SUFFERING?

What, according to God, causes wars? **James 4:1-2, Exodus 15:9**. Does this lust come from God? **1 John 2:16**. Are we compelled to obey these lusts, and cause wars? **2 Timothy 2:22**. So we have a choice NOT to obey these lusts? **1 Peter 1:14-16**.

So if it is OUR choice to obey these lusts which cause wars, what would God have to do to change it? HOW would God prevent war? We already saw that destroying the SYMPTOM of those lusts wouldn't work – destroying the weapons or the dictators would not prevent war. So God must fix the CAUSE. But how?

There are two ways God could do that. The obvious solution would be for Him to intervene and prevent Man from following the dictates of his own his own lust which causes wars. God could simply make all decisions for you. He could take away all free will and all free choice and do everything Himself. That way, no one could EVER make a bad decision, because no one could make a decision at all! All humans would be, in effect, a hive mind for God with no independent thought of their own. It's true, this would make a harmonious world.

But what would the consequences of that be? Your computer can't make a bad choice, or a good one. And so there are never wars between computers – they can't make any choices, so they can't start wars. But can you have a meaningful relationship with your computer? Can you feel love, and compassion from it? You can certainly PROGRAM it to say "I love you!" and "Oh, I'm so sorry you feel bad!" – but since you MADE it say that, the words have no meaning. They can't satisfy you.

If God were to FORCE you to obey – MAKE Man make only good decisions, COMPEL him to deny lust, and passion, and choose only good – how could God derive any satisfaction from that?

In the last lesson you learned that God is building a FAMILY. People He cares about who care about Him. If God were to rob you of free choice – take away your RIGHT to make stupid decisions – He would rob Himself of the very thing He wants to create. God cannot love a mindless drone any more than you can fall in love with your laptop.

But I said there are TWO ways for Man NOT to choose to follow lusts. The one way we just discussed. The other is much harder for Man and much harder for God to accomplish – but produces a much more valuable result!

That second way is to build CHARACTER in Man; TRUE, Godly CHARACTER that each Man CHOOSES to have! And that means to stop war, God must TEACH – not force, but TEACH – Man to RULE his own lusts, and **CHOOSE for himself** to do right!

And that's exactly what God is doing! **"Good" can only be measured against "bad". For a choice to do good to have any meaning, there must have also been an option to do evil which was rejected!**

Consider a rock rolling down a hill; it cannot do good or evil, for it can do nothing but what gravity demands. It does not have the power to make a choice. And so whether the rock falls on someone's head and kills them, or falls on the head of the wolf chasing them, it is neither evil nor good; it is only doing exactly what it was made to do, and what circumstances compelled it to do. So even if it accidentally only does good, it is still meaningless as far as CHARACTER is concerned.

But suppose we could give that stone free will; until we see a place where it has an OPTION to help someone or harm them, and chooses one over the other, we won't know whether the rock itself is good or evil. And so it was with Adam and Eve before they made a choice.

In the Garden of Eden, were Adam and Eve good? **Genesis 1:31**. Had they been exposed to evil? (Same verse). [Note: So their goodness was meaningless because they had not chosen good over evil – they were simply obeying by habit.] Were they then exposed to evil? **Genesis 3:1**. Did they resist evil, or immediately succumb to it? **Genesis 3:6**. Did they choose evil over good? **1 Timothy 2:14**.

Adam was not deceived – not completely deceived, at least – and consciously chose to follow Eve who followed Satan's advice. So now they had CHOSEN. This was a wrong decision, but it was a DECISION. They had never made a moral decision before, they had merely blindly trusted God to tell them what to do!

**Genesis 3:7** records that their eyes were opened – NOW they began making moral choices, starting by eating the fruit which symbolically gave them “the knowledge of good and evil”. Before then, their source of “knowledge of good and evil” had been God. Now they took that forbidden power to themselves, and started making moral decisions! Decisions they were not yet qualified to make, which is why God had forbidden them from doing so!

But was this an accident, a mistake of God's? Did God not see this coming? Did you ever wonder why God let Satan in the Garden of Eden? Think about it. Is God more powerful than Satan? Does God tell Satan where he may and may not go? **Job 1:12**. So then God permitted Satan to go to the Garden of Eden? Many religions picture the fall of Adam as something that surprised God, and salvation as an afterthought, but the scriptures do not agree.

Did God know that Man would sin before Man was created? **Psalms 103:14**, **1 Peter 1:19-20**. Was the plan of God outlined LONG before the world began? **Hebrews 4:3**. Was salvation planned before Adam was created? **Matthew 25:34**. And since salvation was part of the plan, did Jesus agree to die before the foundation of the world was laid? **Revelation 13:8**.

So we can only conclude that God permitted Satan to enter the Garden of Eden for a reason. And what reason was that? **1 Corinthians 11:19**. And how are those that “are approved” made manifest – made to stand out? **2 Chronicles 16:9**. So when God's eyes roam over the Earth, what does He look for? What stands out to Him? (Same verse). So then does God use this choice to help Him decide who is obedient and who is not? **1 Chronicles 28:9**.

Does God at any other time give people the OPTION to do evil, while commanding them not to do so? **Exodus 16:23-26**. Did God do this as a test, so that “they which are approved might be made manifest”? **Exodus 16:4**. Did Israel fail that particular test? **Exodus 16:27-29**. Did God often give Israel opportunities to do evil, while clearly warning them NOT to take advantage of those opportunities? **Judges 2:21-23**, **Deuteronomy 8:2**. And why did God do all that? **Deuteronomy 8:3**.

So then God permits heresies, false doctrines, and Satan himself to exist and be near us, to allow us to freely choose between good and evil? **2 Thessalonians 2:8-12** (especially **verses 10-12**).

Do you begin to see? God PERMITS evil to exist, not because He likes evil, but because YOU must decide whether or not YOU like it! And He must know YOUR choice!

Remember from Lesson 1, God only finished the FIRST HALF of Man's creation on day six. After that, the creation of Man's CHARACTER began. And it began with the very first choice Man made – a bad choice, the wrong choice, but a MORAL choice! A choice based on what Man perceived as right and wrong.

Man made his first moral decision and strange though it may seem, with that choice Man began the process of creating Godly character when he chose to disobey God and follow Satan! Because right or wrong, it was a CHOICE, and therefore a step in the right direction towards developing the nature of God!

But now God presents each of us with an alternative to Adam's choice; Adam made a bad choice, it is true. **Romans 5:12**. But now, through the sacrifice of Christ, anyone can make the right choice. **Romans 5:18**. But we *must* make a **choice**! We must choose NOT to obey sin! **Romans 6:12**.

Does God want you to choose? **Joshua 24:15**. Can you freely choose to disobey God? **Proverbs 1:29**. Do entire nations choose to disobey God? **Isaiah 65:12**. And are wars (the sword) the result of that choice? **2 Chronicles 14:6, 2 Chronicles 16:7-9**.

If wars are the result of a choice to follow after lust, greed, and envy, then the solution would be NOT to follow after lust, greed, and envy. So how does Man learn to do that? The only way possible – by seeing the FRUITS of sin and learning to HATE it and choose God's way instead! See **Matthew 7:15-20**.

In that Scripture, Jesus tells us about false prophets and how to know them! He doesn't expect us to take His word for it! He says WATCH their fruits! SEE what Satan's way of life brings! But then when you see that, He expects you to CHOP THAT TREE DOWN! Then burn it up!

This universal truth applies on SO many levels, from false teachers and ministers who don't teach the Bible, to the evil thoughts of your own heart, and ultimately even to Satan the devil himself! Whatever you see bearing evil fruits YOU MUST CHOOSE TO HATE, and if it is something in yourself, something you are doing or thinking, you must CHOOSE to STOP IT!

**Lamentations 3:33** *For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.*

God does not WILLINGLY allow suffering! He allows it because Adam **freely chose** to follow that path in spite of God's warning, and every man since has supported Adam's decision! Wars are the result of Man following the way of Satan, and not the way of God! And no amount of gun control or prosperity will change the fact that Man chose Satan's way! Nor will it change the fact that right this second, God's will is NOT being done on Earth!

**Matthew 6:10** *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*

If God's will was being done on Earth... WHY PRAY FOR IT? God's will IS done in heaven – you may be sure there is no evil there. **Habakkuk 1:13**. But for now, MAN'S will is being done on Earth.

Did God place Man on Earth to RULE it? **Genesis 1:26, Psalms 8:4-8**. Why? Why give Man dominion over the Earth? Because you learn by doing – and even more by failing. You really learn to walk not by walking, but by stumbling. You learn to run by tripping, and you learn to climb by falling. And you learn to rule by ruling – and ruling badly! As you saw in the previous lesson, God has set up the plan for YOU to join His family, ruling by His side! **Daniel 7:22**. To whom does God give the kingdom? And for how long do they rule it? **Daniel 7:18**.

And because of the enormity of this job, and because of the trust He MUST have in you, God has given you – all mankind – a sandbox to play in. A place to build castles and knock them down, to make mistakes and correct them, to eat some sand and spit it out. Satan exists – evil exists – so that you can see it, see its fruits, and then CHOOSE to destroy it!

Has Man done that? Certainly not! If Man has learned anything from history, it's that Man never learns from history! **Isaiah 66:3**. And so God permits them to experience the fruit of their mistakes. **Isaiah 66:4**. And those of you who make the RIGHT choice will be spared the majority of that "fruit" of their mistakes. **Isaiah 66:5**.

## HOW YOU AVOID SUFFERING

Adam and Eve took the fruit, symbolically deciding to ignore God and make their own decisions. You have followed in their footsteps (**Romans 3:23**). Your goal is to go back to like Adam and Eve were in the beginning – but with one tremendous difference! Adam and Eve had no experience with sin. To them, sin

was an abstract concept, and they had no real reason to believe God's word over Satan's (and Satan's sounded better which helped them decide!).

You, however, will have been drug through the mud of sin, felt it touching you and your family, seen pain and suffering and death on a level that would have shocked the innocent Adam and Eve quite possibly to death. And you can learn WHY God's way works, and Satan's doesn't. **Psalms 34:8**. But how do you do that? After all, you're the child of Adam and Eve, with the same nature, the same instincts, and the same basic start in life; why should you do any better than they did?

Are you born knowing good from evil? **Isaiah 7:16**. Are you actually born preferring sin? **Psalms 51:5**. Is it possible for you, as a normal, "natural" person, to understand why God's way is better? **1 Corinthians 2:14**. As natural, you are carnal – a fancy word meaning fleshly, or one who follows the lusts of the flesh. **Romans 7:14**. And can a carnal person follow God on his own? **Romans 8:7**. So clearly, you need help – you can't do it on your own, no matter how wise you are. **1 Corinthians 3:18-20**. So then what is it that you need? **Romans 12:2**.

How are you to accomplish that "renewing"? It has already been established that you cannot do it yourself. But why? Because on your own, you have no way of knowing right and wrong! Plato tried to discover it, and couldn't. So did Aristotle and Voltaire and so many other philosophers. But none of them could figure out right and wrong, because that knowledge is not inherent in man!

Think about it. You probably think it's repulsive to eat dog. Why? Your "gut" tells you that it's wrong. But why? Where did you learn that it was wrong? And if it is wrong, then why don't they think it's wrong in parts of Mexico and Asia? And why should eating dog be any more repulsive than eating beef, or pig, or lobster? Or for that matter, cockroaches and squid? It's all alive, it all has to die so you can eat it, they all have slimy parts and "beefy" parts... so what is the difference?

This is a tiny issue that serves to illustrate the point that **Man does not have a baseline from which to judge right and wrong!** He guesses, he takes what he's heard from his family, his school, his society, but he has no REAL way to figure out right from wrong except what he wants at the time! And so it's NO WONDER his moral decisions are nearly always wrong!

So the natural man does not know right from wrong, and cannot discover it on his own, because his nature is the ENEMY of God's nature and therefore the ENEMY of right-doing! So for you to learn the TRUE right way of doing things, you need a pattern!

And who would make the best pattern? **1 Peter 2:21**. But how can we know exactly what Jesus would do? **1 Corinthians 2:11**.

Your spirit knows what YOU would do in a certain situation. Your spirit in this context is perhaps best called your "conscience" in modern terms. So likewise, the spirit of God knows what GOD would do in a given situation – it is God's conscience!

So can we get a copy of that pattern to compare? **1 Corinthians 2:16**. And if you have the mind of Christ, are you still carnal, natural, and unable to follow the law of God? **Romans 8:9-10**.

God gives you His spirit to give you a baseline – a perfect pattern to lay out, on the one hand, your conscience, and on the other, God's. Then when you see the comparison, you can finally make an INFORMED choice!

You may want to know exactly how you can tell the one from the other, but that must wait for the lesson on faith to be fully explained! For now it's enough to say that God gives you His spirit because without it, YOU COULD NOT KNOW GOD! You could not choose RIGHT! You could only choose what felt right to you at the time, and that would NEVER be what God would choose except by sheer accident! God gives

you His spirit so you CAN choose right, and choose to reject the ways that cause pain and suffering in this world, and choose LIFE (**Deuteronomy 30:19**)!

God is not the cause of suffering in this world! *God permits it for your own good*, as a part of the NECESSARY development of the heirs of the universe – namely, you and me! God allows Satan to tempt us, warns us what will happen if we do things Satan’s way, and then allows us free choice to follow his sweet, deadly lies – and finally He makes sure we pay the price! Not a price too high for us to learn from, but a price that fits our crime, hopefully sufficient to SHOCK Man into realizing **He is not FIT to decide right and wrong for himself!**

Adam was not FIT to rule, which is why God told him NOT to eat the fruit! God knew Adam COULD eat it – God allowed Adam to do so – but He also knew the untold grief it would bring if Adam was to make his own decisions – and oh, how history has proven God right about that!

Likewise, you, as you are now, are not FIT to make decisions about right and wrong even for yourself, much less for others as you rule beside God! And so you must CHANGE your mind to be, in all points of morality, a COPY of the mind of God!

Must you reject the world, its opinions and ways, to take the mind of God? **James 4:4**. Must you also come out from all unclean things – things that act contrary to God, including churches and friends? **2 Corinthians 6:17**. And even family? **Matthew 10:37, Luke 14:26-27**. And how can we escape that world, and learn to see the corruption and shun it? **2 Peter 1:4**.

How can you show that you’ve made that choice? **James 4:7**. Does that also work in reverse – resist God and He will flee? **2 Chronicles 15:2**. And how do you show you are resisting God? **1 Thessalonians 5:19**. And what happens when you quench the spirit – ignore it, resist it – for a long time? **1 Timothy 4:1-2** (specifically the last half of **verse 2**). And does that prevent you from having true faith? (Same passage). Did their disobedience and resistance to God’s Spirit develop a callous over their conscience and form a wall around their heart? **Acts 7:51**. And did that lack of faith, that unbelief caused by resisting God’s spirit, prevent Israel from entering the promised land? **Hebrews 3:19-4:1**.

So then you must be careful not to allow yourself to get into that situation. Fortunately it is VERY difficult to permanently alienate yourself from God, which you will see when we get to discussing the unpardonable sin in a future lesson. So for now, only be aware of the danger – if you’re reading this course, it is almost certain you have not hardened your heart beyond belief (pardon the pun) yet!

Israel hardened their hearts to God’s spirit and as a result didn’t enter the promised land. To put it differently, Israel chose to follow their own opinions and reject the opinions of God. To follow their conscience instead of His. The point we are to learn from their example is that following your opinions and what feels right to you WILL CERTAINLY KILL YOU if allowed to continue unchecked!

Your heart, as it is, CANNOT save you. It CANNOT help you (**Proverbs 14:12**). It *must* be replaced by a BETTER heart, and your only way to do that is by rebuilding it after the pattern God gives you through His spirit! Much more on that in future lessons!

So what did David pray to God? To keep his heart as it was, but make it a little better? Or to start from scratch, building it from the ground up on a true foundation? **Psalms 51:10**. Can you try to keep the world (your friends and family) and God happy at the same time? **Matthew 6:24**. Must you COMPLETELY submit to the will of God, or can you keep on going your own way? **1 Peter 4:2**. Can you still be basically the same person, just do one or two things differently? Can you draw any line and say “I will do this much for God, and no more”? **Luke 9:62**. So what then must you do? **Ezekiel 18:31**. And this new heart, and new spirit – HOW will that be made? **Ephesians 4:22-24**. And WHAT is your model on this new man, with a new heart? **Colossians 3:10**.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Get that! Notice how that last scripture ties it all back together! You are being made a new man – mentally, that is – AFTER THE IMAGE OF HIM THAT CREATED YOU! That’s the second half of the Genesis creation that YOU are now helping God finish! Truly now you can comprehend why David was inspired to ask

**Psalms 8:4** *WHAT IS MAN, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have DOMINION over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:*

Man was made to have DOMINION, RULERSHIP over ALL the works of God’s hands! **This is WHY MAN WAS MADE!** To rule the universe with the rest of the God-Family! And God has put ALL THINGS under his feet – but not yet! For we see the author of Hebrews commenting on this verse, saying “*But now we see NOT YET all things put under him*” (**Hebrews 2:8**).

All things are NOT put under our feet, because we are not yet QUALIFIED to rule all things! We are yet carnal, and selfish, and would surely ruin the universe as badly as Man has ruined this Earth! Bring suffering and death to the stars, just as Man has brought it to our tiny planet!

God has *not* caused suffering; He has allowed it, because every man and woman who ever lived has INSISTED on doing the things that inevitably lead to suffering! And to deny them their inalienable right to be stupid would be to rob from them their priceless opportunity to build RIGHTEOUS CHARACTER, and build in themselves a MIND LIKE GOD HAS!

Words fail us to describe the awe-inspiring magnitude of this plan, and our future as creatures we cannot yet even imagine! (**Romans 8:18, 1 John 3:2**). In fact, the person you are now could not even be in the same room with the being you shall be after God adopts you into His family!

God MUST permit you to be evil, for your own future is at stake – but He will only permit it for so long, only until such a time as those who are willing to be saved have been saved! There is a time limit! God will not permit this suffering world to continue indefinitely as it is – He has a definite schedule and when the time comes, He will return to rule all nations with a rod of iron (**Revelation 19:15**), and FORCE the nations to obey (**Micah 4:3**)!

...But only after He has given free chance to obey Him to all that will listen. Only after every effort at proving to Man that the fruits of disobedience to the laws of God is ALWAYS death. Then... **1 Corinthians 15:24-26**. Then at last, death itself is destroyed and ALL unhappiness is banished from the universe!

**Revelation 21:4** *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

You are to pray that God’s will be done on Earth because THIS IS WHAT THE WORLD WILL BE LIKE WHEN GOD’S WILL IS DONE ON EARTH! When the world is finally brought into submission to the will of God, THAT is the world that will be created! God will NOT allow suffering in a world that HE runs!

And when that world comes, God wants to have a family who has already been through the fires of sin, and HATES all those things that cause suffering and death as much as He does! A family He can trust throughout all of eternity, to love their neighbors and bring happiness and peace to all mankind and then, He will at last TRULY bring PEACE ON EARTH! God speed that day!

This work is completely non-denominational and is meant to fulfill Christ's great commission to "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (**Mark 16:15**). **This publication is not to be sold;** "*freely ye have received, freely give*" (**Matthew 10:8**).

The Bible tells us to PROVE ALL THINGS, and The Simple Answers encourages people to do just that. If you cannot PROVE what you believe, you have no right to believe it! Many of the things we print are shocking because they are different from what you've heard, but if something we say offends or upsets you, we hope you will take the time to set aside your preconceived ideas and PROVE your point from the Bible to see if you truly have been right all these years.

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