

"Surprised By Suffering"

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1. If God is all powerful, why would He allow suffering? Related to this, why would a holy and loving God allow a child to suffer through a serious illness, such as cancer?

Genesis 3:1-6, ESV. *"Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'"*

"And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'

"But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'

"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. And she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate."

Romans 5:12. *"Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned."*

2. People speak of the problem of pain. Is it not more accurate in a fallen world to speak of the problem of pleasure?

Romans 2:4. *"Or do you presume upon the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?"*

3. When we experience trials, how can we determine if they are the consequences of violating a Scriptural principle, a test from the Lord, or an attack from Satan?

4. In 1 Thessalonians 5:18, we are called to *"give thanks in all circumstances."* What does this mean? Should we be doing this?

5. How does God use suffering for His glory and our good?

a. *Renewed repentance.*

Psalm 32:3-5. *"When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me. My strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah I acknowledged my sin to You, and I did not cover my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD', and You forgave the iniquity of my sin."*

Psalm 119:67, 71, NKJV. *"Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word."*

"It is good that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes."

b. *Prevention from sin and further sanctification.*

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2 Corinthians 12:7-10. *"So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 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 of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

c. To comfort others with the comfort of Christ.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our afflictions, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."*

d. To develop endurance.

Romans 5:3-5. *"More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."*

e. To participate in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.

6. How would you counsel Christians who are suffering with illness or old age who would rather be in heaven with their Lord than here?

a. *We are never alone in our suffering.*

Hebrews 4:14-16. *"Since then we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens—Jesus, the Son of God—let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*

Romans 8:38-39. *"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

b. For the Christian suffering will end, resulting in eternal life.

Romans 8:18. *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."*