

Growing through Suffering Student Notes
Session 1: What in the world is going on?

1. Introduction:

Mark 1:9-15 Surprised by Suffering

Why, Oh Lord? Saints who asked, 'Why'?

Moses (Ex. 5:22, Nu 11:11)
Israel (Nu 14:3)
The nations (Deut 29:24)
Habakkuk (1:3)
Joshua (7:7)
Job (3:20; 21:7)
Psalms (10:1; 44:23; 88:14)
Jeremiah (12:1)

2. Three perspectives from which to answer 'Why?'

3. Why is there suffering in the world?

- a. Suffering is the result of the Fall of man into sin.
- b. Some suffering is a consequence of particular sin. Ex:
 1. David in Psalm 38:3-11
 2. Unworthy communion in 1 Corinthians 11:29-30.
 3. Miriam struck with leprosy in Numbers 12:9-10
 4. Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5
- c. Not all suffering is due to a particular sin. Ex:
 1. Jesus' suffering
 2. Man born blind in John 9:1-3
 3. Timothy had frequent ailments (1 Timothy 5:23); Trophimus was sick (2 Tim. 4:20).

4. The 'problem' of evil: God is good. God is sovereign. Evil and Suffering exist.

What is the relationship between suffering, evil and God's sovereignty and goodness?

- a. God never does evil (Jas 1:12-18; Gen. 18:25; Deut. 32:4; Psalm 145:17; 1 Peter 1:16; Psa. 100:5; 119:68)

- b. God is sovereign over all things, including suffering and evil. *Ex. 4:11 Deut. 32:39*
Isa 46:9-11; Eph 1:11; Dan 4:33-35; Job 42:22; Psa 115:3.

This includes both calamity and blessing: (Eccles. 7:14 Lam. 3:37-38; Isa 45:7).
God's permission of sin and evil is an active permission for His own holy purposes.

Job knew this (1:20; 2:9)

Calvin: Remote (God) and Proximate (man) causes:
God wills for good what men will for evil.

Hebrews 1:3 tells us that Christ "upholds the universe by the word of his power".
Ephesians 1:11—God works all things after the counsel of His will.

God never does evil, but he does *use* evil and suffering. For example,
Genesis 19, Sodom and Gomorrah.
Exodus 7–12, ten plagues.
Numbers 21:6, poisonous snakes to bite grumbling Israelites.
2 Samuel 24, pestilence that killed seventy thousand men.
Hab. 1 Chaldeans, a wicked people, against His people Israel to discipline them,
Job 1:6-12 Satan to destroy Job's property and children

c. Sovereign God holds people responsible for their actions (see Rms. 1:18-3:20)

1. Joseph knew this.

"And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life" (Gen. 45:5).
"God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance" (Gen. 45:7).
"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives (Gen. 50:20).

2. Peter knew this.

"...for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place." (Acts 2:22-23).

5. Suffering, sovereignty and the Goodness of God.

The Point: As difficult as suffering is, it's not an accident. Even though you face things that make no sense to you, there's meaning and purpose to everything you experience. God Himself brings about all things for his glory (see Ex. 9:13-16; John 9:3) and for his people's good (see Heb. 12:3-11; James 1:2-4; Romans 5: 3-5).

God uses even something as terrible as sin and suffering for good (Romans 8:28-29)

6. How are we to understand all this?

‘Secret things’
Deut. 29:29
Psalm 139:4-6

God’s ways are higher
Isaiah 55:8-9
Rms. 11:33

Ant analogy.

What we know is enough.
2 Peter 1:3-4. “...His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”

7. What does all this mean for us? When we suffer, we can be sure that:

- Christ is guiding and governing, carrying all the things we are suffering by his all-powerful word to where it will accomplish exactly the good that He has planned for it to do.
- People are held responsible for the evil they do. God hates evil, and all evildoers will be judged, according to His justice.
- Whatever God is accomplishing as He actively carries along all things, is just and right. God is Good! We can trust Him to be a refuge for us (Psalm 57:1).
- If we are Christians, then we can be sure beyond all doubt that God is causing all things—including all of our suffering at the hands of evil persons—to work together for good because he has called us according to his purpose (see Rom. 8:28).

8. Honest Groaning (Psalm 6:6; Psalm 88)

“Weeping may last for the night, but joy is coming in the morning” (Ps. 30:5).

"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." John 16:33

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Rms. 15:13

For more study: God permits, allows- what happens; See Gen 31:7; Ex 12:23; Ps 16:10; Lk 8:32; Acts 16:7 and God wills, sends, decrees—Isa 46:10; Pro 19:21; Eph. 1:11; Lam 3:37-38; Acts 4:27-28; Job1:21; 2:10; Dan 4:35).