

The Existence of Suffering



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Intro: “The Problem of Suffering”

- The Age-Old Philosophical Question:
 - “If God is all-powerful – and all loving – why is there suffering in the world?”
 - As all powerful – he *could* do something about suffering
 - As all loving – he *would want* to do something about suffering
 - Yet – suffering exists
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Text

Romans 8:18-25 (ESV)

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. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Context – living “in the Spirit” – in fellowship with God – while in the context of being here on the earth in fleshly form

Emphasis: spirit is life --- flesh is death

Point: Paul is saying that the suffering we endure here is not worth comparing to what we have ahead of us (in Heaven)

How Suffering Came

²⁰ *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it*

- “creation was subjected to futility”
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- Goes back to Gen 3 – “the day you eat of it you will surely die”

- **Genesis 3:17-19 (ESV)**

¹⁷ *And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”*

Why Suffering Remains

(God subjected it) in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly

When Suffering Ends

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. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.*

A future glory is planned – and guaranteed to us – by God’s

- **Revelation 21:1-8 (ESV)**

¹ *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new*

Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.”* ⁴ *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away*

○ **Revelation 22:3-5 (ESV)**

³ *No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.* ⁴ *They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.* ⁵ *And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.*

- How could an all-loving and all-powerful God allow suffering?
 - Because he assigned it – he sentenced it – as a response to sin
 - Because he took steps to eliminate it completely by the blood of Christ
 - And in his good time he will do so
 - Now – he waits until his full harvest comes into grace
 - Because only our suffering leads us to seek his hope in Christ

Conclusions:

- Suffering exists because of God’s own sovereign response – in discipline – to our sin
 - God may choose to eliminate a particular suffering for one of his children
 - He may choose not to
 - Grounded student:
 - Parent may allow them to go to Prom – considering it is a once in a lifetime event
 - Parent may not – but even if they do – the grounding will still be in effect the moment that one time event is over
 - We live in a fallen world
 - As such – we will NEVER escape suffering while bound to this reality
- BUT – suffering WILL END for those who are in Christ
 - Sadly – it sill NEVER end for those who are not
- So we know why a good, loving, all powerful God allows suffering
 - It is the response of a Good being to evil – punishment and disciplinary action – spoken in advance
- What we SHOULD focus on:
 - This Good, loving, all powerful God provided us an escape from suffering
 - Those arguing its existence should be pondering its elimination
 - That’s what a good, all powerful all loving God does

- He saves his creation from his own judgment – if they would only accept his conditions