

Human Suffering – Sickness and Disease

- Suffering due to sickness and disease are the consequences of a world that is under God's curse because of sin.
- God is sovereign over all suffering and all healing.
- God designs to display His glory in and through our suffering.
- God designs all suffering in a Christian's life to work for His good.
 - An atheist would probably answer with the first point. Suffering is simple a natural experience and has no deeper meaning. Therefore, the goal is to use scientific knowledge to try to eliminate sickness and disease.
 - A Hindu might respond with the second point. For example, maybe in your previous life you were healthy and did not care about the suffering of others, so now the consequence is that you must be sick in this life.
 - Some might answer the last point: God simply will not or cannot control what ultimately happens to us. Although God might feel bad that we suffer, there is nothing He can do about it other than sympathize and help us get through it as best we can.
- Therefore, it is important that we understand what the Bible has to say about _____ so we are rightly _____ when suffering comes.

But what does the Bible say?

Romans 9:20, 22-23 – *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it...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 eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*

How would this “futility” apply to the human body? _____

In verse 23, what is meant by this phrase? “...we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly... _____

1. God has _____ the whole world to a curse because of sin. This includes suffering experienced as sickness, disease, and death.
2. God is _____ and _____ in all He does.

Sometimes people will accuse God of not being in the midst of suffering. They will challenge the goodness of God by saying things like:

- If God is good, then why is there suffering?
- If God is good, why was my innocent baby born blind?
- What have I done to deserve this?
- Why do I have cancer? I have been a good person!
- Why did I have a heart attack? I have always been careful to eat right and exercise.

3. God is _____ over all suffering and all healing.
4. Any role that _____ may have in bringing suffering is limited by god's sovereign rule.

But if God is ultimately sovereign over illness, disabilities, and Satan, why does He allow suffering at all? Why not simply heal everyone?

- How could not having arms or legs be for the better? How could being blind be for the better? How could having cancer be for the better? How could being sick and missing a ball game be for the better?

John 9:1-3 – *As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."*

- What mistaken view of the cause of this man's blindness did the disciples have? _____

- What was Jesus answer? Why is this answer shocking? _____

2 Corinthians 12:8-10 – *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 weakness, 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.

➤ What did God design to display in and through Paul's suffering? _____

5. God designs to _____ His glory in and through our suffering.

6. For _____, God designs all sickness, disease, and disabilities to ultimately work for our good.

- She was the teenage girl from our earlier examples who dove into the shallow water and broke her neck.
- For Christians, suffering is meant to make us more like Jesus. Suffering is a means of God's sanctifying work in our lives. It reminds us that we are weak and frail and totally dependent of God.
- So, let's say that you have tickets to the big game and get sick and miss it. It could be that God is using this in your life to protect you from making sports an idol in your heart.

7. God wants His people to _____ for those in the midst of suffering, and comfort them.

8. For Christians, sickness and suffering are only _____.

Romans 8:22-23 – *For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of child birth until now. 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.*

- According to verse 23, what great joy can Christians look forward to in our present suffering? _____

Philippians 3:20-21 – *But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself.*

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.*

