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WHY GOD ALLOWS SUFFERING

Suffering! It's all around us in the area of violence and abuse, divorce and war, natural disasters and disease. And bewildered millions want to know why. We gasp at the wreckage of a tornado and the broken bodies scattered about. We walk through a hospital corridor and see the faces of fear and misery. We shed tears over loved ones we have lost. It takes a strong heart not to cry out, "If God is a God of love, why is there so much suffering? Why doesn't He do something to stop it?" Once again His word contains the answers.

1. Who did Jesus say was responsible for this woman's illness? Luke 13:10-12, 16

2. Who gave Paul his "thorn in the flesh?" 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

3. What are the two reasons given why Paul should not have this problem removed?

a. _____

b. _____

4. Did the Galileans suffer a calamity because they were worse sinners than others? Luke 13:1-3

5. Was the blind man born blind because of sins he and/or his parents committed? John 9:1-3

Note: "It was generally believed by the Jews that sin is punished in this life. Every affliction was regarded as the penalty of some wrongdoing, either of the sufferer himself or his parents. It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God's law but this truth had become perverted. Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God; as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin. Hence one upon whom some great affliction or calamity had fallen had the

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additional burden of being regarded as a great sinner.” Desire of Ages, p. 471. This was the main reason why Jesus did so much healing. He wanted to dispel this error and show the mercy and compassion of God on all suffering humanity. Satan causes suffering but God can allow or overrule for purposes of mercy.

6. What did God promise Adam and Eve that He would do? Genesis 3:15

“I will put _____ between you (serpent) and the woman. He (woman’s seed) shall crush your _____, and you shall strike His _____.” (NKJV or KJV)

7. To whom did the expression “her seed” refer? Galatians 3:16 _____

Note: Because of the promise that God had made, there is always a conflict between Satan (the prince of this world) and those who follow Christ. The real conflict was magnified with Christ shown as bruising the serpent’s head (destroying Satan) and Satan bruising Christ’s heel (causing suffering). It was God’s plan to come and offer Himself up for a sacrifice for us all. Some question why God did not destroy Satan as soon as he rebelled. There was no way to explain sin to a universe that had never experienced it, and God would not, could not have a kingdom in which His subjects served Him from fear instead of love. So He had no alternative. The plan of rebellion must grow until all could see the kind of fruit it bore.

8. What one word best describes God’s character? 1 John 4:8 _____

Note: Whenever the Bible talks about the love of God, it specifically uses the Greek word, “agape.” This word is used to convey a love higher than we humans can produce on our own. The other words of love denote a brotherly love or a romantic love (Phileos and Eros). Whenever we try to label God’s love for us as a kind of human love it perverts the gospel of Christ. His love is much higher and broader than ours.

9. What help does God offer his followers? 1 Corinthians. 10:13

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10. What is the result of trials in our lives if we are God's children? Romans 8:28

11. What is the desired result of God's discipline in our lives? Hebrews 12:7-11

12. How does God relate to our suffering? Matthew 25:31-45; Acts 9:1-5

13. What assurance will help our faith to remain strong? Romans 8:35, 38, 39)

Conclusion: Not only does God set limits beyond which Satan cannot go, and promises us power and help from heaven, but He also assures us that from our ordeal He will work ultimate good. We may not understand how this can be, but in the hereafter it will become clear. Even in this life we may often see God's hand in our trials. It is God's purpose to develop our character and lessons are often learned in adversity.

You are God's masterpiece. He has a goal and purpose for you and He uses your lifetime to produce it. Only through Christ can God make you the way He wants you to be.

ANSWER KEY TO LESSON #17

Q. 1- Satan

Q. 2- Satan

Q. 3- To keep from being conceited and to depend on Christ more

Q. 4- No

Q. 5- No

Q. 6- Enmity; head; heel

Q. 7- Christ

Q. 8- Love

Q. 9- God will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear

Q. 10- God works things out for our good

Q. 11- It produces righteousness and peace in our lives

Q. 12- He suffers right along with us

Q. 13- God will always love us and will never abandon us