

The Problem of Suffering

Scripture Reading — Psalm 119:65-72

Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word... It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.

—Psalm 119: 67, 71 —

Why do bad things happen to good people? The age-old issue of suffering is one of the most common objections to the Christian faith. The argument: If God is all-powerful and good, he can and should prevent suffering. So God is either not powerful, or not good, or both.

God's Word speaks to this dilemma. The Bible reveals that affliction comes not from God but because of sin in the world, in our lives, and in the lives of others.

The assumption that all affliction is bad is not true. Job learned more about God's greatness through a time of severe loss (see Job 1-2, Job 38-42). Joseph was prepared through unjust suffering for the special task of rescuing God's people (see Genesis 37-50). Paul asked God to take away a personal affliction, but the Lord showed him that his weakness would make him a more effective witness for Christ (2 Corinthians 12:1-10). The greatest sufferer of all was the Lord Jesus (Luke 22-24). And the benefit of his suffering brought the greatest good of all: our eternal salvation.

Yes, God is good—always. By allowing suffering, he corrects us, refines our faith, forms us to be like Christ, and prepares us for heaven, where pain and tears will be banished forever.

Prayer

Lord, you know each one who is suffering today. By your good and powerful compassion, grow perseverance, holy character, and hope in the hearts of all who struggle. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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