

THE PROBLEM OF PAIN AND SUFFERING

INTRODUCTION:

- A. People do suffer: U.S. has been at war almost continually since 1776 (even before that) Then Civil War 1861 - 1865. World War I 1914 -1918; WW II 1941-1945; Korea 1951-1953; Vietnam 59-75; Desert Storm 91; Afghanistan 2001- -; Iraq 2003 - - etc. Then child abuse, murder, floods, tornadoes, cancer, old age, etc, etc 1Cor 12:26; 1Pet 4:12-19
- B. Pain is real, suffering and anguish all around us and raises problems for a Christian--why pain and suffering?
- C. Bible tells us of love and power of God 1Jhn 4:8; Gen 17:1
- D. The Problem of Pain in its simplest form is this: "If God is love, He would want to make His creatures happy, and if God is almighty, He would be able to do what He wanted. But His creatures are not happy. Therefore, God lacks either love, power, or both."
- E. Error of above conclusion comes from misconceptions about God (his omnipotence, love and purpose for man)

DISCUSSION:

I. FREEDOM OF CHOICE DOES NOT NEGATE GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE

Rev 19:6

- A. Much of pain in world comes from man's freedom of choice
 1. Man free moral agent--choose good or evil Gen 2:16-17
 2. Man chose evil, result - pain and suffering Gen 3:16-19
 3. Source of much of man's pain is sin--not Adam's, but our own Rom 5:12
- B. Man's freedom to choose seen in Josh 24:15
 1. God in making man a free moral agent, **restricted His own power** – a ball bat can be used to hit a home run or for bashing someone's head. God does not intervene.
 2. Man's freedom to choose provides avenues for acts of unselfishness and love, but also provides avenues for treachery, war, and suffering
- C. Not even God can create a society of free souls, and simultaneously prevent them from evil
 1. Pain we suffer is caused by man, not God
 2. Even in natural disasters it's not God's fault. Yes, he set nature in motion, but does not cause specific events such as: accidents, tornadoes, volcanoes, floods, etc.)

II. GOD'S LOVE DOES NOT MEAN PAIN FREE

- A. Love is an overworked & often misused concept - some say they love food--we can tell by looking at them
- B. God's love beyond comprehension Jhn 3:16; Rom 5:8,9
- C. God's love is more stern, and splendid than we might imagine--love can be PAINFUL Heb 12:5-11
- D. Pain not necessarily God's doing, may just be nature

III. ANALOGIES THAT ILLUSTRATE GOD'S PURPOSE

- A. POTTER AND THE CLAY - Isa 64:8; Rom 9:21

1. We are in truth a Divine work of art
2. Consider Potter's creation. With a simple bowl he might not take great pains, but with his life's work, the work he LOVES, he will go to endless trouble, and take great care. He rubs, scrapes, reworks the clay, and fires it. If the clay were alive, it might wish it were only a simple bowl, it might feel pain suffered under hands of potter--it might even be UNHAPPY
3. We might wish God had designed for us a less glorious and difficult destiny, but then we are wishing not for more love, but for less....
4. Children's Song: "He's still working on me; To make me what I need to be; It took him just a week to make the moon and stars; The sun and the earth and Jupiter and Mars; How loving and patient He must be 'Cause He's still workin' on me." Also, popular country song "I'm a work in progress" by Alan Jackson Job 23:10; Jas 1:2-4

B. PHYSICIAN AND PATIENT Matt 9:10-12

1. Jesus refers to himself as a physician
2. Sometimes the physician in treating us hurts us (getting shots hurts!)
3. Physician realizes that some pain now works to our advantage later ("no pain - no gain")

D. FATHER AND SON Heb 12:4-13

1. Biblical analogy of God the Father treating us like children needing discipline
2. My father a strict disciplinarian--"this is going to hurt me more than you...."
3. Discipline serves to make us better

E. JOURNEY ANALOGY Matt 7:13; Jhn 14:2,6; Acts 9:2; 2Cor 5:1

1. Sometimes we are happy--God provides physical blessings (rain falls on just and unjust) Matt 5:45
2. But all earthly happiness is temporary--we find happiness in our families, a sunset, etc.
3. God provides us some pleasant inns along the way, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home
4. Sometimes (not always) God uses pain and suffering to prod us--to get us moving again on that path HOME.

CONCLUSION:

- A. To ask that God be content with us as we are is to ask that God cease to be God.
- B. You see, GOD ALREADY LOVES US, NOW HE LABORS TO MAKE US LOVABLE
- C. Our happiness here is not the end God has in view: but, when we are such as He can love without impediment, we shall in fact be happy. 1Pet 4:12-19