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What You Need to Know About Pain: Part 1

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PAIN

(Part One)

Of all the subjects previously discussed in the *What You Need to Know* series, this topic is the only one the reader already knows more about than he or she would care to know!

We begin by noting the words of the apostle John:

“But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets” (Rev. 10:7).

What is the nature of this mystery? Some believe it may well refer to that future and long awaited moment when God will, for the first time, fully reveal the divine reason why He once allowed, and, up to this present hour, continues to permit suffering to plague the human race! This unresolved question has, no doubt, as no other, caused more hatred for God by the ungodly, and more sorely challenged the faith of the godly!

The following series overview attempts to offer some insights in regard to the problem:

- The origin of suffering
- Attempted answers concerning suffering
- Sources of suffering
- Reasons for and benefits of suffering
- Desired reactions to suffering
- The divine call in regard to suffering
- The assurances in suffering
- The termination of suffering

Today we will discuss the first three of these topics.

THE ORIGIN OF SUFFERING

To illustrate in drama fashion what really transpired in the beautiful Garden of Eden at the moment of the fall, consider the following scenario:

Adam and Eve are comfortably located in their lovely Garden Park home. Suddenly there is a loud pounding on a side entrance of their home.

Adam: “Who’s out there? What do you want?”

Intruder: “My name is sin. You’ve never met me I know, but I’d like to come in and help straighten you two out concerning some of your outdated fundamentalist hang-ups. You’ll find humanism far more satisfying to the flesh than holiness. I want you to taste some of my special goodies—‘For God doth know that in the day ye eat therefore, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.’ ”

Adam: “Well, I guess it’s okay to come on in. But remember, this is more my wife’s idea than it is mine.”

Adam walks over and opens the door. He is immediately knocked down and stripped of his clothes by two vicious and horrible appearing individuals. Eve runs over to Adam. By this time they both are thoroughly frightened. In a trembling voice, Adam asks:

Adam: “Who are you two? Where did you come from? Why have you treated us this way? What do you want from us?”

First Character: “My name is Physical Death and Sin sent me. If you think I’ve hurt you so far, just wait until you see what I’m going to do. From this point on I plan to plague your fleshly body with ailments, injuries, pain, anger, loneliness, despair, frustration, and whatever other tortures I can think of. Finally, I’ll yank your soul from your body and dump your lifeless corpse into a grave!”

Second Character: “My name is *Spiritual Death* and Sin also sent me. I’m ten times meaner than *Physical Death*. I intend to fill you with the dread of dying and to keep you at any cost from knowing God. My ultimate goal is to land you right in the middle to the eternal lake of fire!”

Of course this exact conversation never actually took place in Eden, but the theological truths expressed in these sentences actually occurred.

ATTEMPTED ANSWERS CONCERNING SUFFERING

Because suffering is both so universal and unsettling, it is not at all surprising to find many attempted answers to explain this dreaded dilemma. Here are but a few of the suggested solutions.

An evil former life: Eastern religions which advocate reincarnation offer this interesting answer, namely, that all suffering in one’s present life is simply a punishment for those wrongs committed in a former existence. If this be true, what bloodthirsty monsters Joseph, Job, Jeremiah, Paul, and Christ must have been in previous lives!

Dualism: Like reincarnation, dualism is a vital plank in the platform of some Eastern religions. In essence it says there are two gods (or principles) governing the universe, one good and the other bad. They are equal, eternal, and non-contradictory.

Fatalism: The Islamic community with its hundreds of millions accept the most frightful suffering with a shrug and the comments, “It is the will of Allah!”

Hedonism: This is the modern playboy philosophy to pain. If it feels good, do it twice! Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die! In other words, the answer to pain is to substitute it with pleasure. Replace it with sex, money, power, drugs, or whatever else turns one on!

Evolutionism: This says simply that suffering, like digestion, is a part of life. We are assured that for some unknown reason, those accidental and uncaring mechanical forces which brought life out of nothing into existence, also programmed that life organisms would suffer before they eventually pass into eternal oblivion.

Stoicism: The stoic would tell us suffering can be overcome merely by ignoring it!

Christian Science: According to its founder, Mary Baker Eddy, the solution to pain and suffering is to utterly deny its presence, for in reality, neither exists, except as error in mortal minds!

A powerless God: This proposal concludes that the God of the universe, while possessing pity, does not exercise complete power. In other words, like some earthly doctor, He stands by helpless and frustrated in the midst of human woe.

A pitiless God: Here we have just the opposite of a powerless God. This position holds that God indeed possesses sufficient power, but is short on compassion. Thus, all sorrow and suffering can be directly traced back to an indifferent deity!

Personal sin: This answer rests upon the basic assumption that it is never in the perfect will of God for a Christian to suffer, especially if the suffering lies in the physical realm of sickness. Therefore, the conclusion is that all physical suffering in the life of a believer must be directly and only attributed to some personal sin in his or her life!

SOURCES OF SUFFERING

Suffering Source Number One—Caused by Satanic Activity

During his conversation with Cornelius, Peter explains to this Roman Gentile the words of both Christ and Satan:

“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10:38).

Suffering Source Number Two—Caused by Ungodly Men

The apostle Paul wrote of this in his final words to Timothy:

“Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works” (2 Tim. 4:14).

Suffering Source Number Three—Caused by This World’s System

The Old Testament patriarch Lot, living in a perverted Sodom, was painfully aware of this terrible pressure from a wicked world system. In his second epistle, Peter mentions this.

“For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds” (2 Peter 2:8).

Suffering Source Number Four—Caused by the Believer’s Own Fallen Nature
Paul struggled, as do all of us, day to day with his fallen nature. In some detail he records this for us:

“For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. For I know that in me that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Rom. 7:15, 18-19, 21-23).

Suffering Source Number Five—Caused by Other Carnal Christians

The Scriptures describe the terrible sufferings endured by our Lord while upon this earth. But I believe one of the most severe was the mental anguish caused by being denied at the mouth of His own most trusted disciple, Simon Peter. The gospel account informs us that Christ actually overheard these terrible denials. We read:

“But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice” (Luke 22:56-61).

Few will disagree that the most crushing mental pain imposed upon a Christian on occasion comes from another Christian! To be unfairly criticized and mistreated by those belonging to the same family of God and household of faith can prove to be almost unbearable!

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