

## 124. The Problem of Suffering

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ.  
[1 Pet. 4:12–13]

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The new life in Christ we have been studying in [Romans 8](#) does not eliminate the problems of life. Nor does our new life prevent suffering. For the next several studies we shall consider this problem.

Christians suffer—often intensely and sometimes for long periods of time. This is a fact of our lives about which the Bible has much to say.

One of the things that makes me indignant (with righteous anger) is to hear a

teacher or preacher say that suffering, pain, and death do not come from God but from the devil. Not only is this grossly untrue to the Scriptures, but it also removes all comfort from people in pain. Such teachers are saying that people who suffer are in the hands of Satan.

This is not the case at all. God allows suffering and pain to come our way, and he has reasons for it. We are not to count it as some “strange thing,” Peter tells us, but to understand that “it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God” (1 Pet. 4:17). As the author of Hebrews writes, “the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son” (Heb. 12:6).

The belief that our labor is in vain and that it has no purpose makes suffering hardest to bear. Usually we cannot see the purpose for our pain, and perhaps in this life we never will know what reason God has in mind for taking us through such

trials. But the Bible shows us a God who is involved with his people in their suffering. It shows us a Jesus Christ who is the “man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering” ([Isa. 53:3](#)).

It is impossible that any pain should be without purpose. If God really exists, there is no such thing as meaningless suffering. The sovereign God of the universe has a good purpose in all that he sends our way. It is incumbent upon pastors and teachers to be able to express how intimately God is sovereignly involved with our suffering.

### ***Coram Deo***

Isaiah says the suffering servant will see the suffering of his soul and be satisfied ([Isa. 53:11](#)). How foreign is the soul’s satisfaction to most of us. As earnestly as you pray for relief, implore God to nurture your soul, replacing doubt and discour-

agement with contentment.

For further study: [Job 1–2, 42](#); [Hebrews 12:1–13](#); [James 1:2–4](#); [1 Peter 2:18–25](#)