

The Purpose of God in Suffering

Franklin Church of Christ
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AM Worship

Introduction:

- A. **Imagine a life where there is ...**
 - 1. No pain or heartaches to deal with.
 - 2. Nothing to worry about.
 - 3. Sounds a bit like heaven, doesn't it?
- B. **In our effort to avoid pain and suffering we strive to make this world as comfortable a place to live.**
 - 1. We crave activities that are "fun" and enjoyable.
 - 2. This lifestyle – over time – brings about a fond attachment to this world.
- C. This lifestyle makes it difficult for us to see God's purpose for suffering in our lives. Cp. **Ecc. 7:4**
- D. In this lesson:
 - 1. We look at our natural desire to steer clear from pain and suffering.
 - 2. Note that when we look beyond our lives we begin to see God's purpose in pain and suffering.

Discussion:

- I. **OUR NATURAL DESIRE: AVOID PAIN AND SUFFERING**
 - A. In our modern western culture life is centered on comfort:
 - 1. Our meals and refreshments: easy to attain; 'comfort foods'.
 - 2. Our homes and cars: luxurious and comfortable.
 - B. We strive to avoid pain and suffering altogether.
 - 1. Youth sports: so that no one suffers the agony of defeat: trophies for all.
 - 2. Medicines: instant comfort for our aches and pain.
 - 3. Parent-child relationships: forgo 'tough love' to avoid our/their pain and suffering.
 - C. **None of the above are wrong ...**
 - 1. It does, underscore a general mindset that affects how we view pain and suffering.
 - 2. In the end our attitude becomes one of self-sufficiency – in need of nothing or anyone else ... including God.
 - 3. NOTE: a lack of trials in our lives makes for greater difficulty coping with the realities of pain and suffering.
 - D. **Our Natural Desire: Avoid Pain and Suffering**
 - 1. We become attached to the comforts of this life ...
 - 2. When trials that result in pain and suffering come: we have difficulty coping with its realities.
- II. **SEEING GOD'S PURPOSE IN PAIN AND SUFFERING**
 - A. **It causes us to look INWARD**
 - 1. Chronic comfort makes it is difficult to see beyond our personal circumstances.
 - 2. Yet, pain and suffering finds us all and causes us to look inward and realize our end.
 - 3. Looking inward helps us realize we are lacking and need to look elsewhere for relief from our pain and suffering. **Jas. 4:14**
 - B. **It causes us to look UPWARD**
 - 1. When we are faced with pain and suffering we naturally look to beyond ourselves for comfort.
 - 2. If we look up to the heavens we will find a God who longs to be our Comforter.
 - 3. He provides us comfort through all our trials. **2 Cor. 1:3-4**
 - C. **It causes us to look OUTWARD**
 - 1. Looking outward is the beginning of selflessness.
 - 2. Having looked upward to God we learn of love in providing us eternal comfort through Jesus. **2 Thess. 2:16**
 - 3. Looking outward moves us to imitate our God of comfort by comforting others in need. cp. **2 Cor. 1:4**

Conclusion:

- A. Living only for 'self' makes it difficult to see God.
- B. Pain and suffering, however, have a way for those who look beyond themselves to find God's purpose in it. **Matt. 5:3-6**