



The Problem of Suffering

John 9:1-7

QUESTION OF THE DAY

How are we to reconcile the idea that God is good and all-powerful in light of all the suffering we see in the world?

Introduction

A common objection raised up against belief in God

How can goodness and omnipotence co-exist with evil and suffering?

How do we think about God vis a vis our own actual or potential suffering?

Three main streams of suffering: bad decisions, Christian faith, innocent victim

The blind man in John 9 is an example of the latter

“Innocent” suffering is the more complex related to God’s role

Is God Pro-Suffering?

“God is more interested in my character than my comfort” (Rick Warren)

Against the notion that suffering is a favorite tool in the tool-box of God

Look at the beginning (**Genesis 1-2**) and the end (**Revelation 21-22**)

The saving arc of the Bible: from Abraham (**Genesis 12:3**) to Jesus (**John 3:17**)

The purpose of Law: to protect/extend human flourishing: **Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-3**

The model of Jesus during His earthly ministry as a healer: **John 9, et al**

Jesus’ attitude at the graveside of Lazarus: **John 11:32-44**

The Lord’s Prayer: **Matthew 6:13**

The substitutionary nature of Jesus death for the whole world: **John 1:29**

Why Doesn’t God Just Prevent Suffering All Together?

God created the best of all possible worlds

He is committed to playing by His own rules

The importance of freedom in the creatures that bear His image
Freedom makes love possible
Freedom actions entail infinite consequence chains
Why sometimes God intervenes and sometimes He doesn't?
The mind boggling complexity of an interconnected world
God's restraint due to His unwillingness to "cheat" the rules He set in place
Thinking that He would intervene if He "could" (in a self-regulated sense)
God often doesn't get credit for the suffering He has unknowingly prevented
Furthermore, so often the case is "not **out** but **through**": **John 17:15**

Special Music Interlude: "Even Though"

Where is God When I am Suffering?

The one promise that is ALWAYS applicable: God is WITH us: **Matthew 28:20**
As an encourager and strength-giver: **1 Corinthians 10:13**
But more: Jesus is one who understands from the inside out
He has been tested in ALL ways as we are: **Hebrews 4:14-16**
The treasure in the dark: a unique intimacy with Jesus: **Philippians 3:10**

The End of the Story

Suffering does not have the last word
Suffering will end: **Revelation 21:4**
But more: suffering will be *redeemed*: it will be forced to serve a greater good
No evil and suffering will retain a trophy inside God's story
The cross is ground zero and the seed of this redemption: **Colossians 1:19-20**