

Suffering And Pain!

Are They From God For Our Good?

By B. D. Tate

When Adam and Eve were in the **Garden of Eden** did they suffer and have pain? When we all get to **Heaven** are we expecting suffering and pain? It seems clear to me that suffering and pain occur now in this in-between time of after the Garden of Eden and before Heaven—the time of the fall!

Jesus taught (Lu 11:2), "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. **Your kingdom come; Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.**" Stop and think about this for a moment. Jesus is the Son of God and is the living expression of the Word of God. Jesus knows the Father and the Father has sent Him to us. As much as anything else that could be said Jesus is the expressed will of the Father upon the earth. Jesus knows the will of God and this is what He taught us to pray. He taught us to pray that God's will be done on earth **AS** it is in heaven. That sets a strong foundation that God's will for us on earth is the same as it is in heaven—there is no suffering and pain there!

Furthermore, John the apostle wrote:

Re 21:4 "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. **There shall be no more pain,** for the former things have passed away."

In the new kingdom of God there will be no more pain! That is a remarkable statement that really seems to bring home the point that pain and thus suffering are not God's will. **When we are living in the full measure of God's will in the kingdom of heaven "there shall be no more pain" what could be clearer than that?** When Jesus taught us to

pray like He did it was because we are **NOT** living in the full measure of God's will. In fact, the apostle Paul described the times we are living in like this:

Eph 5:16 "...redeeming the time, **because the days are evil.**"

Eph 6:13 "Therefore **take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day**, and having done all, to stand."

When it comes to understanding suffering and pain we must come to understand **the days we are living in**. We are not in the kingdom of God yet. We are living in the "days are evil." We are living in the fallen world and the sin cursed world. **We live in a world fallen from God's grace!** We are not experiencing God's will we are experiencing the will of man and the god of this world—Satan. Therefore, we must understand how God's sovereignty over all things works in this lost world. How is it that God is sovereign but His will is not being done here? How can God be Almighty and not be in control? If God controlled everything we'd be in heaven right now; however, we all know that not the case.

The confusion occurs because the Bible describes God in many places as Almighty, Omniscient, and Omnipresent. We read verses that describe God such as:

Isa 46:9 Remember the former things of old, **For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me,**
10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, **'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'**

We clearly see that God's counsel shall stand and He will do all His pleasure. Who can shut the door the Lord has opened?

Re 3:8 “I know your works. **See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it;** for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

And,

Isa 55:11 “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, **But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.**”

These only begin to express the true nature of God and His power. When we speak of God’s will, word, and kingdom however, there is another **just as power force** to consider always (a force that comes from God). God’s sovereignty includes **His designed and predestined will that we have free will**. Often God’s sovereignty is defined as uncontestable, irresistible, and unstoppable. For some it is taking God’s sovereignty and saying it is being diminished, threatened, thwarted, or somehow contradicted, to bring into play the will of man. The either/or scenario that it is God’s sovereignty or nothing misses a whole lot; that is if we define it as absolute control of all things always—as if there is no free will.

God’s Sovereignty Provides Free Will!

We must take the time to understand how God can be completely sovereign while at the same time **giving dominion to others**. **This is important because it has everything to do with suffering and pain**. The source for suffering and pain does not come from God’s will but it does come from God’s **gift of dominion to us**. God cannot lie and what He’s given by His word cannot be annulled. God cannot violate Himself or go against His word. God is Almighty and nothing is impossible with Him; however, He cannot contradict Himself and His word. He is His Word and His Word defines all things. By His Word all things were created and all things are sustained. God is not frivolous in speaking His Word. What He says He means; what He means He says. He is not like humanity that

speaks evil and idle words. He is not like us to lie, deceive, or change His mind. So how is it that God can be sovereign and yet provide dominion to us?

The Video Game Analogy

If we can understand how a video game works then we can understand how God's sovereignty works. Just like God programmed all of life so a programmer programs any video game. Everything in life is sowing and reaping, cause and effect; likewise, the video game is programmed by the programmer in every respect. With all things predetermined why would anyone want to play a video game? **It is because the programmer in programming programmed choice.**

God's sovereignty is manifested in life's choices. We don't diminish the programmer's programming when the video game includes multiple choices; in fact, we give higher praise to the game that is more like life! Why then should we diminish God's sovereignty when His programming of life gives us true choices? The more we exercise our dominion in God's game of life according to His will the more glory it brings to God. The problem of course is that dominion that has been given by God's sovereignty **has not been according to His will**. Much of the sovereignty of God (given free will) has been used for evil.

Suffering And Pain Come From Selfishness!

Suffering and pain come from dominion exercised in ways God's love would not. The world has fallen from God's grace into sin and the curse. All suffering comes from sin and the curse of the law. **All suffering and pain come from sin which is self centeredness and self rule**. We do not have the love of God in us until we come to Christ in salvation.

The Good, Acceptable, And Perfect Will of God

God's **good will** is to save us from the fallen world and the curse. God's **good will** is for us to accept our salvation and walk in the Spirit. God's **good will** is for our life to be hid in Christ who is our intercessor always (Heb. 7:25).

God's **acceptable will** is to bring good out of evil. God's **acceptable will** is to bring life out of death, blessing out of the curse, and to make all things work for our good (Rom. 8:28). This means that God takes what happens in the fall and in Christ makes us new. This means that whatever has happened God can make it turn for our good. This means that God does not bring the bad stuff but He can overcome it through Christ.

Rom. 12: 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

In heaven there is only God's perfect will; however, on earth there are three expressions of God's will: the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God. Paul teaches us that we are to be **transformed by the renewing of our mind** so that we may prove, discern, and/or understand what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

Unless we are transformed we will not be able to prove the difference between these three expressions of God's will. The word "Transformed" is the Greek word "metamorphoo" (the root word for metamorphosis) which means that we will be changed into **another form**. This means therefore, that we will not remain carnal, natural, and darkened in our understanding. For the natural mind is unable to receive the things of the Spirit nor understand God's will (I Cor. 2:14). God's will is that we **put on the mind of Christ**, receive the revelation of

the Spirit, and think in the realm of faith! God wants us supernatural in our understanding. One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the gift of discernment. This gift comes to us by awakening to spiritual life.

We must also grasp that there are **two kinds of knowledge** that come to our mind one is natural and the other is spiritual. Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is based on **revelation knowledge** of the Spirit. Unless we are born again we cannot receive this revelation knowledge (John 3:5). Revelation knowledge gives us the presence, the person, and the nature of God dwelling in our heart. We discern what is of God and what is not. We discern what God's will is and what it is not; even to the casting down of every contrary thought!

II Cor. 10:5 5 "casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, **bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,**"

This is to say that we have the very thoughts of Christ within our spiritual mind. This also means that revelation knowledge not only renews our thinking, understanding, and reasoning; **it transforms us!** This is so important to realize that we are **being morphed into the new creation from the old one within our heart**. We are being transformed, changed into the same image, the same nature, and same attitudes of Christ!

2Co 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being **transformed into the same image** from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

This transformation is taking place in our soul not our spirit. For the spirit man is already complete in Him! As this transformation takes place we are equipped to discern the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

Suffering and pain do not occur in God's perfect will. They only occur in God's **acceptable will.**

Ro 8:28 And we know **that all things work together for good to those who love God,** to those who are the called according to His purpose.

In God's perfect will (heaven) there is no pain and suffering just as the earlier verses declared:

Re 21:4 "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. **There shall be no more pain,** for the former things have passed away."

In God's **good will** what we have is restoration, redemption, and deliverance from the evils being manifested under His **acceptable will.** Our God is able to bring good out of evil. Our God is able to make all things work for our good; that however, does not in any way mean that all things that happen to us in life come from God!

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. **In the world you will have tribulation;** but be of good cheer, **I have overcome the world.**"

Does God Allow?

Some might argue that since God allows evil that He is therefore responsible for it. When God set up dominion he charged Adam and Eve **to keep the garden** against evil.

Ge 2:15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden **to tend and keep it.**

In giving humanity dominion it is true that He gave *potential provision* for evil (choices other than His own) and its consequences but

remember what God’s attitude towards using our freedom to indulge the flesh is?

De 30:19 “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; **therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;**

Once God gave dominion over to Adam and Eve **they became responsible for what choices were made.** God set up the video game of life so to speak and gave us authority to make choices in it. When we make choices that are evil, selfish, and destructive God is not responsible for it, we are. **In fact, just as the programmer of a video cannot control how a player plays the game, neither can God in all integrity control how we live our life!** That is why Paul wrote:

Gal. 6: 7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; **for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.**

8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

God’s sovereignty is fully realized no matter what someone does they will reap what they have sown—we have God’s word on that! The law impartially judges every one of us who are under its dominion. We cannot escape its judicial actions except through the cross of Christ (Gal. 3:13)!

The law is perfect but it was given to bring us to the knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20). The law’s purpose could never make anyone perfect before God but it was to keep us under its tutelage until Christ (Gal. 3:24). **The law in God’s perfect will scenario would have never been needed.** The law is not for the righteous but for the unrighteous (Just as a fence is for a dog that will not stay while a dog that does not roam needs no fence).

Under God's **acceptable will** man has dominion and the ability to rebel against him (to roam); therefore, the law was necessary to bring every one under guilt and condemnation (a restraint). The law was God's **good will** in order to bring everyone to their senses and their need for the Savior.

Suffering and pain come primarily as a consequence of human decisions based on sin nature—self centeredness. It is true that many have learned good lessons from suffering and pain but in each and every case it is the “school of hard knocks” not God's perfect will.

Character Through Suffering And Pain

Many believe and have been taught (or taught others) that without pain and suffering they would have never come to their senses. They would not have learned great lessons of sacrifice, hard work, endurance, and the victory of overcoming. Many have felt that their tough and painful experiences helped them to grow up, mature, and be more aware of other's suffering and pain. They became better people. This in essence is good being brought out of evil.

Some believe that without suffering and pain we'd be weaker, immature, selfish, insensitive, and lack character. **Suffering and pain teach us hard life lessons that without it we'd never learn.** The sacrifices of parenthood, sacrifices of military service, wrestling with failure and success, experiencing winning and losing, not to overlook the suffering of self discipline in dedication, practice, long hours of study, the denying of pleasures to seek a goal! All of these types of things have contributed to growth and understanding for many in life. **All of them have to do with dealing with carnal man and buffeting their sin nature.**

There is truth that we learn great lessons from suffering and pain; however, **when we look at redemption we must consider some amazing spiritual facts.** “*Without pain there is no gain*” has become a

very familiar and accepted philosophy; however, when it comes to the **gospel of grace** suffering and pain have taken on *divine purposes!*

Jesus suffered tremendously: by being beaten, His beard being plucked, a crown of thorns forced on His head, the 39 stripes by the cat-of-nine tails with barbs (and glass?) that ripped open His back, the rejection of the people, the condemnation of the religious leaders, the betrayal of Judas and the abandonment of His disciples; then ultimately the crucifixion itself being unimaginable pain, to finally cry out *“My God, My God why have you forsaken me?”* We know from the depiction found in Isaiah 53 that all of this was a **substitutionary atonement** for all of us! Listen to the verses again:

Isa. 53: 3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he hath borne our grief, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

Jesus’ suffering and pain was not for Himself but for us to redeem us from sin and the curse of the law. He bore our punishment, our judgment, and every claim of the law against us until God’s righteousness was satisfied (Col. 2:13-15). The redeemer paid the price in full and there is nothing we could ever do to contribute **one ounce to it.**

The suffering and pain that we experience now is the consequence of our own decisions and/or those around us. It is from the fall and curse that is in the earth; however, as far as God is concern Jesus paid for all of it for us—it is finished.

Joh 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. **In the world you will have tribulation**; but be of good cheer, **I have overcome the world.**"

When we became born again we became a new creation in the same image, nature, and being as Jesus (I John 4:17). We were bought with a price and there is no more price to be paid. **This new creation does not need suffering and pain to be conformed into the image of Christ we already are—all we need do is look to Jesus.** We don't need to "pay our dues" Jesus already paid them. We don't need to learn from suffering and pain to develop character and Christ-likeness, we are already like Him (II Cor. 3:18).

Suffering and pain is for the old man just as the law and the Ten Commandments are for the old nature. Under grace we are no longer under the law or the need to suffer and be in pain from the curse. We have died to the old ways. **The learning from suffering and pain disciplined the old man in order to keep us from becoming completely depraved.**

There Is Suffering Of The World And The Sufferings Of Christ!

It is vitally important that we discern the difference so that we can walk in God's grace. Under grace the suffering and pain we enter into now are the sufferings of Christ:

Php 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, **and the fellowship of His sufferings**, being conformed to His death,

We learn from the life of Jesus the righteous sufferings He endured on the earth. These sufferings were not from the fall or the curse of the law! The sufferings of Christ are: denying the flesh (Heb 12:4), resisting

temptations, and obeying the law of faith (Rom. 1:5)! The suffering of fighting the good fight of faith to stay grace minded! To stay under God's authority and entrust all judgment to Him! Consider these verses:

I Pet. 2:21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, **leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:**

22 "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth";

23 who, when He was reviled, **did not revile in return**; when He suffered, **He did not threaten**, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;

24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.

Phil. 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:
6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 **But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant**, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, **he humbled himself**, and **became obedient** unto death, even the death of the cross.

I Pet. 3:8 Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous;

9 **not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing**, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

10 For "He who would love life And see good days, Let him **refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit.**

11 **Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it.**

12 For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."

13 And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?

14 **But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed.** "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled."

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

16 having a good conscience, **that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.**

17 **For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.**

The suffering and pain we experience as sons and daughters is to weep with those who weep, sorrow with the lost and dying, see to help the helpless, and to seek first the kingdom of God within us and to be about the Father's business!

God's **good will** is for us to walk as Jesus walked in this life (1 John 2:6). His suffering was identifying with the lost. His suffering was seeing the great need and not being able to meet all of it. Therefore, He said:

Lu 10:2 Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; **therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.**

The suffering and pain we experience under the curse of the law as Christians is to miss grace. For Christ died to deliver us from it in this life (we won't need deliverance from it in heaven—there is no curse there)!

As sons and daughters we are redeemed from sickness and disease because we have been **freed from the sin that caused it.**

Ro 6:7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.

Special Note: We don't need this kind of suffering and pain to develop character; **we have already been given the very nature of God!** What we need to do is understand what God has done and live in His grace.

There is suffering and pain that true Christians should experience: persecution, offenses, trials, struggles, difficulties, hard times...that come against the truth in us.

2Ti 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus **will suffer persecution.**

There Is Suffering That Will Be For Our Good!

There is suffering and pain that we should rejoice in because it has come to us from doing what is righteous and good. It has come to us because we have fulfilled the call to walk in a worthy manner of Christ's calling (Eph. 4:1). As we live by faith in His grace, shining forth the love of God and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, the world will reject us. The enemy will place struggles, trials, and hard times in our way to discourage us. Just as it was with Paul who had suffered many persecutions and difficulties on His missionary journeys:

II Cor. 11: 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.

25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness--

28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

Furthermore, because Paul had received such powerful revelations:

II Cor. 12: 1 It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord:

2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one was caught up to the third heaven.

3 And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows--

4 how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

5 Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities.

A messenger of Satan was sent to stop Paul. Paul's thorn in the flesh was a messenger of Satan to **cause havoc everywhere he went...**It was Satan's attempt to prevent Paul from preaching the revelations of Christ! Satan was trying to stop the exaltation of Jesus by Paul! These types of suffering and pain are acceptable to God **for the benefit of the gospel!**

II Cor. 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, **a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.**

8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities (weaknesses), that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities (weaknesses), in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Certainly the love of God for the lost and dying is greater than His love for us not to suffer pain, persecution, reproaches, rejection, distresses, even needs. In fact, we should rejoice again that we are counted worthy to suffer for Christ! These kinds of sufferings, the sufferings of Christ, are good for us. When we avoid these things, resist them, and try to keep away from them, we are missing God! Indeed, for the love of others God will lead us into these things as a by-product of witnessing for Jesus. This has with it great reward in heaven!

Jesus said,

Joh 15:18 **"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.**

1Pe 4:19 **Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.**

We must discern between the sufferings of Christ and the sufferings of the world from the curse of the law! The world is fallen in sin and selfishness and God's will is not being done on the earth that is why Jesus said this:

Mt 18:7 **"Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!**

Lu 17:1 Then He said to the disciples, **"It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!**

Conclusion:

Suffering and pain are a part of this world. We must know the difference between what God's will is and what is not. God's promise is to bring good out of evil and to make all things work for our good;

however, that does not mean that all suffering and pain come from God! We need to stand in His grace to overcome the curse of the law and the powerful deceptions of the evil ones. We need to embrace the fellowship of Christ's sufferings for others so that we walk in newness of life and the power of His resurrection! Amen.

Other Booklets:

Where Does Sickness and Disease Come From?

What Is Going On? (A breakdown of the many aspects of dominion)

God's Will Is Not A Mystery

Vague Christianity

Why Is There Healing?

Healing Is A Major Aspect of the Gospel?

Why Aren't All Healed?

What Was Jesus' Attitude Towards Sickness And Disease?

He Ever Makes Intercession

Two (False) Pillars: Does God Allow? Why Doesn't God Intervene?