

# Forty Days of Purpose Devotional

## Day 25 "There is a purpose behind every problem."

The question of why God allows (and sometimes causes) suffering is traditionally one of the most difficult for Christians, and in fact is a stumbling block for many in coming to accept Christ. The answer is really not that complicated: suffering is unpleasant, whereas renunciation of sin is all important and often occurs after suffering. Many people blame God, but the ultimate root of all suffering is humanity's sin (not necessarily the one who suffers). God uses suffering to expose sin (in us or in others):

*"But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful."*

(Rom 7:13 [NIV])

But of course our good and loving Father does not just leave us there, staring at the full revelation of sin and its consequences. Suffering teaches us to hate sin and put our faith in Him who died to take away our sin, and thereby receive eternal life:

*"The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

(Rom 5:20-21 [NIV])

We can learn from the author of Psalm 119, who clearly expressed his understanding of his suffering:

*"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word. . . . It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees. . . . I know, O LORD, that your laws are righteous, and in faithfulness you have afflicted me."* (Ps 119:67, 71, 75 [NIV])

- Suffering passes away, whereas the consequences of how we live, either righteously or sinfully, have eternal consequences (see 2Cor 4:17).
- God's greatest desire is for us to turn from our sin and to Him. The suffering sin causes, especially to us and to the innocent, reveals the ugliness of sin and helps us learn to hate it.
- Although God loves us as His children, our redemption requires discipline that works, which often means discipline that hurts (see Heb 12:5-11).
- God is pleased when we learn the wisdom of hating sin (Prov 8:13) without suffering: "For He does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men" (Lam 3:33).

Pain in the body is called pain, while pain in the soul is called sorrow. Neither is any fun. No one is expected to covet pain or sorrow, but we must try to understand God in the light of His wisdom, not ours (which is no wisdom at all). Jesus willingly suffered pain to bring about our redemption, and Paul said "I rejoice in what was suffered for you" (Col 1:24). What is God's attitude about sorrow? "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death" (2 Cor 7:10-11). Write out a prayer asking God to give you His mind and His heart in regard to suffering.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---