

Why So Much
Suffering?

In Our World



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Scripture quotations taken from The World English Bible

Introduction

There are always at least 2 sides to every argument when we come to the subject of religion. I doubt that there would be 1 verse in the bible that we all understand with no disagreements.

Therefore, I would like to start by saying that everything written in this booklet is my understanding on the subject. Obviously you may agree or disagree with me and I have no problem with that. If you are reading this message, then at least that means that you have an interest in the matter, so all I ask is that you do two things before you get started.

First say a prayer and ask God to guide your thoughts and that He will lead you into the truth. Not necessarily to believe me, but to believe your own Bible. And that leads me into the second thing I ask you to do, and that is to get out your bible and check my work.

Please take these two requests seriously as they just may affect the way you understand what I am writing about. There is no greater authority on this subject than what it reveals to us in the Bible, and if you believe in God, and the power of prayer, then put that power to good use in your life.

My bible of choice has always been the New International Version (NIV). Only because I find it easy to read and understand. If you have a different version of the bible that is perfectly OK. The wording may be different, but I am sure you will find the meaning of the verses to be the same.

I am thrilled to think that someone has seen fit to read this message, and I sincerely hope you gain a lot of pleasure and understanding from these pages. I pray that our amazing God will lead you into truth of this matter from His word, The Holy Bible. Please read the following scripture from the book of 2Timothy and think on the true meaning of this verse.

2Ti 3:16 Every Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness,

With this thought in mind, let us proceed. I hope you have taken my first request seriously and have said a brief prayer for true understanding. I also hope you have your own Bible handy and will use it throughout this study.

Our World

I don't think I really have to tell you all, but this world is in a real mess and seems to get worse day the day. The pain and suffering we see on the TV and all around us is not how we live.

I feel diseases are getting worse compared to when I was a young man, or is it just that modern communications has made us more aware of them? Am I just imagining it or are there more and more young and very young people suffering from cancers and other insidious diseases.

Are we polluting ourselves to death because of how we live?.

Some time ago I ask my wife if she came face to face with God, what one question would she ask Him, and that question would be "Why is there so much suffering in the world". I believe that it a very valid question and one that most people would ask..

So, after having opened that can of worms, I thought I had better try to give an answer, and this message is what I came up with in answer to her question.

So today I would like to answer this question. Probably the hardest and most difficult of all questions to answer.

There are two different aspects that we need to consider with this topic. The first is the moral side, The way we treat each other, our prejudices and hates. And the other is the physical side, the earthquakes, tsunamis etc. that seem to happen with greater frequency and devastating power.

Our Freedom

Because God gave us free will to live how we want to live, we see the lifestyles of many of His children going in what the bible calls the “ways of the flesh”, and these “ways of the flesh” are accurately described for us in 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verses 1 to 4

2Ti 3:1 But know this, that in the last days, grievous times will come.

2Ti 3:2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

2Ti 3:3 without natural affection, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, not lovers of good,

2Ti 3:4 traitors, headstrong, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God;

We see examples of this type of living every day when we watch the news. These attitudes are prevalent and what makes up most of the news stories each night.

The news that we watch each evening is full of bad news and is dominated by the results of humans living as these verses describe. We have seen over the last generation or two, how these ways of life are becoming more prevalent as many people are now more self-centered, and the welfare of others is very much secondary. There are many good God-fearing people in this world, who are doing the works of God, even many atheists are doing these good deeds, and although they may not believe in the existence of God, they are doing His work because His laws are alive in their hearts even though they do not realize it. These people are in for a very pleasant surprise when they see the living King return.

I know that when I was a young man, most people had respect for other people, for our police and government officials. But I have seen the changes where there is not a lot of respect for anyone anymore, and it seems to be a case of “I’m all right Jack”. When I spoke of the increase of disease earlier, I wasn’t sure if it was my imagination or not. But with the behavior of people today, there is no doubt that there has been a very dramatic decline in our moral standards. I wonder

where we will be in a few generations' time!

Free Will

So since God has given us the free will to live our lives the way we want to live, we must make choices every day about how to live. When we get up in the mornings, did we have any choice about what we will do for the day, was our day already mapped out for us? Could we have gone fishing or maybe we could have gone to a sporting event like the football or cricket? No one forces us to do anything that we do not want to do, we all have free will to do what we want to do.

Thanks to the love that God has for us, He has made us free individuals, and allows us the privilege to decide for ourselves, whether our choices are good or bad, they are still our own decisions to make.

We can read about this freedom in Galatians chapter 5 and verse 13

Gal 5:13 For you, brothers, were called for freedom. Only don't use your freedom for gain to the flesh, but through love be servants to one another.

Also in 1 Peter 2:16

1Pe 2:16 as free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bondservants of God.

In these verses we can see that we have been set free, but we have also been advised to use that freedom wisely by not indulging in the flesh, but by serving others in love WE must make a choice, God will not force us to do what is right, we can live our lives obeying God and living the best that we can, or, we can "indulge in the flesh", the choice is ours to make.

For God to love us He must give us complete freedom to do what we want to do, not what He would have us do, and unfortunately this means we can choose to do either good or evil. This is the risk that God took when He made us, He knows the end from the beginning, so it did not come as a surprise to Him when we fell off the wagon. He knew we would sin against Him.

Satan influenced Adam and Eve to sin, and this is the start of our woes. And ever since that time humans have been gradually slipping deeper and deeper into a state of “me first”, a state where people’s primary concern is for themselves and serving one another humbly in love never even enters their minds. There are still many people who do not live like this, but I think their numbers are dropping. If we loved each other as God loves us, then we would help each other, make sure we were all well sheltered, well-fed, well clothed. Wars would not happen if we did not hate. Starvation would not exist if we loved enough to share.

Just think of the billions and billions of dollars we spend every year on weapons of war, security systems, and even down to the locks on our doors and windows. All this money could, and should, have been spent on helping those in need. Imagine a world where this happens.

God could have wired us differently, but He would have ended up with just another mob of sheep, but we were created to have communion with God, He wants to share His life with us, so we were made in His image. He made us free to choose how to live.

Yes, He could have stopped us from harming each other, but only by forcing us to obey His rules and taking away our free will and freedom. It is our lack of concern for our fellow man that causes wars, poverty, starvation, crime, drug abuse and murders.

Freedom in God's Universe is True Freedom, it is absolute. You and I can do anything that we please. If we want to break any of God’s or man’s laws, we can do exactly that. There is no-one who pulls our strings. When God made mankind, He set no limits on what we could do. Notice that God told Adam and Eve that they must not eat from the tree of knowledge, He did not make it impossible for them to do so. They did what was not meant to be done.

It is important to realize that God’s laws are also absolute. If you break His laws, then you must pay the penalty, same with man’s laws, except in this case it is more a question of IF you are caught and IF the police are not corrupt, then there is a penalty.

Consider this. We are free to bang our heads against a brick wall, but we are not free from the consequences.

Or

You have freedom of choice; you don't have freedom from the consequences of your choice.

Or

You're free to be as wise or foolish as you wish, but the consequences for how you choose to exercise your freedom are dictated by laws that are immutable and unchangeable by anyone.

God's Love

God's love for all of humanity is beyond our ability to comprehend and understand. The love between The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit is the greatest love anyone could ever imagine. So seeing a glimpse of how much Jesus Christ loves us, please read John 15:9.

Joh 15:9 Even as the Father has loved me, I also have loved you. Remain in my love.

Do you see what this means? As God the Father loves Jesus with that amazing love, so Jesus loves us with the same intensity of love.

Now it may sound strange to say this, but when we consider the type and extent of God's love for us, I think we may better understand why there is suffering in His creation. We all know the famous verse.

Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

When you read this passage, there should be no doubt about whether God cares about us. To send Jesus to die in our place is an amazing act of grace, not something we can earn, or that we deserve, it is only a gift from God to us.

1 John 4:8 and verse 16 John states that "God is love" this is His essential essence, this is who He is,

Because of God's great love and sacrifice, we now have a way to be reconciled with Him through Christ. This does not mean that we will no longer suffer in this world, but it means that we will spend eternity with God. There will come a day when God "*will wipe every tear*" from our eyes and, "*There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of thing will pass away.*" (Revelation 21:4).

Without this incredible self-sacrifice of Jesus, we would still be in our sins

and have no hope of any sort of future with God, but now we have an amazing future to look forward to. God's love for us is absolute, total, and it is unconditional, He loves us because He created us in His image and wants a personal relationship with each one of us.

We know that God only wants what is good for all of us. If He was to micro manage our lives, the world would be a place where sin and evil could not possibly exist, but it would also be inhabited by a mob of robots forced to live every day and every second of our lives doing only what God insists we do.

But God's love does not force us to live in a certain way, but leaves us free to make up our own minds about what we will, and will not do. God's love is so great He will not force us to do either good deeds or evil deeds, we are all free moral agents. This is nicely summed up for us in the GCI booklet "God revealed in Jesus Christ". I quote from that booklet:

“What God has done in Christ to reconcile us to himself calls for a response. We are urged to accept him, to welcome and receive him. We do so by trusting in him and what he has accomplished for us. The Holy Spirit enables us to welcome the truth and walk in it. But God does not force us to accept the truth of his love for us. A love that forced a responding love would not be loving. God's love then calls for our decision to receive and freely love God in return.

Our choice is to either affirm or deny the reality that God loves us and has made every provision for us to be his children. Denial of this truth has consequences, but it will not change the reality of what God has done for us in Christ and thus who we are in Christ. Human beings choose to accept who Christ is or attempt to live in denial of who he is.

Real freedom is found in God.”

End of quote

Could God Prevent the Suffering?

When God created the entire universe, He used His abilities to plan, design, to set out the way things work. He used His talents to visualize what He wanted and then set about to carry out His plan.

When God created humanity, He gave us the extraordinary abilities to create things. We can visualize an airplane, design all of its parts, and put it together so these amazing things can actually get off the ground. We can build skyscrapers, massive cruise liners, we can understand physics and electricity, so we can manufacture television sets and radios.

Unfortunately, we can also make very sophisticated and powerful weapons of war. And not only do we make them, but we are also ready to use them. Wars have been a way of life for thousands of years and no doubt will continue to be until Jesus returns and sorts out the mess we have made.

When we read James chapter 4 and verses 1 to 3, we can see just one reason for the troubles of this world.

Warning Against Worldliness

Jas 4:1 Where do wars and fightings among you come from? Don't they come from your pleasures that war in your members?

Jas 4:2 You lust, and don't have. You murder and covet, and can't obtain. You fight and make war. You don't have, because you don't ask.

Jas 4:3 You ask, and don't receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

These troubles come from the desires within us, remember the ten commandments where we are told not to covet, not to desire what other people have, coveting is greed and just one of the many acts of the flesh that are sins against God.

We also read in Romans 3 and verses 17 and 18:

Rom 3:17 The way of peace, they haven't known."

Rom 3:18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

When people do not have God in their lives, when they have no fear of God before their eyes, they live how they want to live; they live according to the flesh.

In Galatians chapter 5 and verses 19 to 21, we have an excellent description of what it means to be indulging in the flesh.

Gal 5:19 Now the deeds of the flesh are obvious, which are: adultery, sexual immorality, uncleanness, lustfulness,

Gal 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousies, outbursts of anger, rivalries, divisions, heresies,

Gal 5:21 envy, murders, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these; of which I forewarn you, even as I also forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit God's Kingdom.

How often do we see this life style making our news each night? So many people display at least one, and usually more of these characteristics.

These acts of the flesh come about because people live according to the lifestyles that we read about earlier in 2 Timothy. God's laws, and the laws made up by our governments, mean nothing to some people, and they are only sorry for their crimes after they have been caught and have to face some kind of penalty.

If they had not been caught, then they would have just continued committing the crimes as before, with little or no remorse. Crying crocodile tears after being caught is not really being truly sorry for your crimes.

Social Media

Social media has taken the whole world by storm over the last couple of decades, and so many people cannot function without their phones or i-pads. This is only adding to the problem of our own self importance and the most important thing to share is what we had for breakfast. These devices are fantastic if used correctly, but as with all inventions, Satan will find a way to use them to his advantage.

How many times do you see on these social media sites people arguing over some trivial matter. It doesn't seem to matter what the subject might be, there will be those who have a different idea on the matter and are more than happy to express their ideas. When things start to get a bit heated, we can see comments such as "go hang yourself" or "kill yourself"

This type of bullying is widespread and some young people have actually taken their own lives because of this type of on-line bullying

With the easy to set up fake identities on the web, it is easy to start cyber bullying from behind the screen of a false identity. A cowards way to bully.

Adam and Eve

It is impossible for us to even imagine what life would have been like for Adam and Eve before they sinned against God. They were created in His image and would have enjoyed perfect physical, mental and spiritual health. Their world provided everything they needed so they could live in perfect harmony with God and His creation. God walked with them in the evening and talked to them, no doubt teaching them all they needed to know so they could care for the garden that was provided for them. They were free from any sinful thoughts or actions and even though they were both naked, they did not see this as a shameful thing.

(Gen 2:25) The man and his wife were both naked, and they were not ashamed.

But as soon as they both ate from the tree of knowledge their eyes were opened and they realised for the first time that they were naked and were now embarrassed and ashamed that they were naked, so they sewed fig leaves together to cover their nakedness.

Gen 3:7 Their eyes were opened, and they both knew that they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together, and made coverings for themselves.

This was the first human sin in the history of humanity, and it was because of their choosing to eat the forbidden fruit. It was their free will in action. We know they were enticed and guided and lied to by Satan, but it was still their free will to eat the fruit.

Gen 2:16 Yahweh God commanded the man, saying, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden;

Gen 2:17 but you shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; for in the day that you eat of it, you will surely die.”

God did not prevent them from eating of the forbidden fruit. He was

allowing free will to take its course. When Adam and Eve believed Satan, they rejected God and His ways that would have led to the perfect life. They ate from the wrong tree, and this sin against God was the start of our troubles.

Israel Sinned

We can again see man's free will in action when Israel rejected God as their king. They demanded that Samuel appoint for them a king in place of Samuel's sons, who were in power only to line their own pockets. That should sound rather familiar today as well. We read this in 1 Samuel Chapter 8 and verses 1 to 7.

1Sa 8:1 When Samuel was old, he made his sons judges over Israel.

1Sa 8:2 Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abijah. They were judges in Beersheba.

1Sa 8:3 His sons didn't walk in his ways, but turned away after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.

1Sa 8:4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together and came to Samuel to Ramah.

1Sa 8:5 They said to him, "Behold, you are old, and your sons don't walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."

1Sa 8:6 But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." Samuel prayed to Yahweh.

1Sa 8:7 Yahweh said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in all that they tell you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me as the king over them.

Israel rejected God, not the other way around, it was just another example of man's free will in action.

God Does Not Cause Suffering

So it is not God that is causing anyone to suffer, the problem lies in human choices, people making decisions that harm other people resulting in all the problems above. People sinning against each other and against God.

People are manufacturing drugs, and this is proving to be a major issue in many countries. Good old-fashioned greed drives them to produce these substances that cause so much damage to relationships, not to mention the physical and mental health of the users. Then the drug addicts turn to crime to pay for these expensive drugs.

This is our free will in action, not God's fault, He does not want this any more than we do. Jesus came into this world to free us from our sins, He did not come to control us or to stop the problems facing the world today.

The world produces enough food to feed everyone, so why is there so much starvation and poverty. It comes down to man's refusal to share the blessings he has received from God. Governments are more interested in the mighty dollar than they are in the welfare of others from other countries, and sometimes the welfare of their own people.

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Satan, Father of Lies

Satan, the “father of lies”, who lead Adam and Eve into sin, is still holding the world in his power and will continue to lead the entire world away from God. Since God has given us free will to choose, most of the world has followed the ways of Satan and are happy living in the “ways of the flesh” not knowing the fate that awaits them. They have given up on God, and His holy words have no meaning for them or as we can read in Romans 1:28.

Rom 1:28 Even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting;

Satan’s greatest strength comes from the fact that he is not known by the world, many people do not believe that God exists and therefore do not believe in a devil either, and this is exactly what Satan wants so he can then go about deceiving and leading people away from God. Satan and his followers are spirit beings and we cannot see them, hear them, feel them or smell them, They are around us, yet we do not recognize their presence or their influence.

We can see from the following verses that Satan and his followers pretend to be followers of Jesus, but are actually slowly leading people away from God. This is always his aim, to destroy anyone who would believe in God.

2Co 11:13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as Christ’s apostles.

2Co 11:14 And no wonder, for even Satan masquerades as an angel of light.

2Co 11:15 It is no great thing therefore if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

Constant Battle

Yet we are in a constant battle with these beings as recorded for us in Ephesians 6:12.

Eph 6:12 For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world's rulers of the darkness of this age, and against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

So we are in a battle with evil spirits, and the next 5 verses tell us how we can defeat this evil.

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

Eph 6:14 Stand therefore, having the utility belt of truth buckled around your waist, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

Eph 6:15 and having fitted your feet with the preparation of the Good News of peace;

Eph 6:16 above all, taking up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one.

Eph 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

Putting on the full Armour of God is another way of saying that we must live our lives as faithfully as we can to God and His perfect laws, or as was recorded for us in 2Thess 2:13-17.

2Th 2:13 But we are bound to always give thanks to God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth;

2Th 2:14 to which he called you through our Good News, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2Th 2:15 So then, brothers, stand firm, and hold the traditions which

you were taught by us, whether by word, or by letter.

2Th 2:16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace,

2Th 2:17 comfort your hearts and establish you in every good work and word.

When we ignore this type of advice and give up on God and stop following Jesus, when we stop studying His word and praying for each other, this is when we remove the Armour of God. And when we do this, this is when we can expect an attack from Satan and his cohorts and will be led even further away from God. So again it must be our free will to keep this armor on at all times, as this is the only way to win this struggle.

Unfortunately, many people use their precious freedom to live according to the flesh, or committing sins against God and our fellow man, and this is the direct cause of all of our suffering in the world today.

Only when we all choose to live according to the laws and ways of God will we see an end to the moral troubles of this world. And this will only happen when our Lord returns to this weary old world and gives us the heart of flesh that He promised us in Eze 11:19 and again in Eze 36:26.

Eze 11:19 I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you. I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh;

Eze 36:26 I will also give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you. I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

All we can do is to keep trusting God, praying for each other, doing good where-ever we can regardless of what others may think and do. This is what God wants from us

That about covers the reason for the moral troubles in the world.

Natural Disasters

These “acts of God” as they are often referred to, cause many people to ask the question. If there is a God who is supposed to be sovereign over the entire creation, why does He allow these killer events to keep on happening, Why do so many people die or are left homeless and heart broken. If He truly cares about humanity, surely He can stop this pain?

Just why is God credited with these disasters “or acts of God”, yet when things are going along smoothly there is no credit given to God for the good times, people just get on with their lives and do not think why these good times are occurring, shouldn't these also be regarded as “acts of God”. No, let's just blame God for the bad stuff.

I am sure that if we ask people in a survey what the one question is that they would like to ask God, then it would be this question of WHY!

Why!!

So just how do we answer a question like that. How do we understand God's plan for the world and explain about problems such as these?

How do we explain nature going crazy and causing these disasters? As we do not have the mind of God, or know His ultimate plan for His creation, we can only see some hints what the cause of these problems may be.

So what I have to say from here on, is what I see and understand, hopefully I am not too far away from reality. There are hints recorded in God's word that may help us understand, so I will try to explain them as best I can and hope that you gain something from this message.

I see the root cause of these disasters as sin entering the world, exactly the same as the start of our moral issues, and occurring at the same time and because of the first sin in the Garden of Eden.

How to Explain This

First, we must go back to the time of creation and to see what kind of world God had created. Was it a place where these disasters were already occurring, or was it different? When we read Genesis chapter 1 and verses 4 through 25, we see God was pleased with His work for on 6 occasions in these few verses we read “And God saw that it was good”.

Then in verse 31, After God had created the human species in His own image, when the work of creation was finished we read, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day.”

This world was designed to be a paradise for us to live in, where everything is good and where we could enjoy a life free of hardships and troubles. If God thought it was very good, then it was not just reasonable, there were no flaws in His creation, there was nothing left to chance, His work created a veritable paradise for humanity to live in.

And if it was a veritable paradise, then there would have been no decay, confusion or corruption to the physical world that causes these natural disasters, or as they are commonly called “acts of God” that cause humanity so many heartaches.

But we see right from the time of Adam and Eve’s disobedience, when they ate some forbidden fruit, that things went pear-shaped for humanity. So maybe the fruit was not an apple after all. And the paradise that was made for them, and us, was deteriorating. Paradise was lost.

We can read in Gen chapter 3 and verses 17 to 18:-

Gen 3:17 To Adam he said, “Because you have listened to your wife’s voice, and ate from the tree, about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ the ground is cursed for your sake. You will eat from it with much labor all the days of your life.

Gen 3:18 It will yield thorns and thistles to you; and you will eat the herb of the field.

So, if you are wondering why your garden has to compete with thorns and thistles, now you know! And the ground was cursed to produce thorns and thistles.

Notice that it was Adam and Eve's disobedience to God, or sin entering the world, that set in motion the corruption of the world.

The book of Romans Chapter 8 and verses 16 to 25 gives us a clue as to the cause of natural disasters.

So starting in verse 16, we read.

Rom 8:16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God;

Rom 8:17 and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if indeed we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him.

Notice here that we are to share in the sufferings of Jesus, we are never guaranteed a life free of trouble, pain and suffering. In fact, it is just the opposite as we read in John 16 verse 33.

Joh 16:33 I have told you these things, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have trouble; but cheer up! I have overcome the world."

So we should not be surprised when trouble comes knocking on our doors. Back to Romans 8 and verse 18:

Rom 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which will be revealed toward us.

Here Paul is saying that no matter how bad things may get for us in this present life, the reward we will reap when Christ returns will make our present suffering soon disappear and be forgotten as we live in the Kingdom of God. Notice here that the glory will be revealed IN US. Not to us, but in us.

We must always remember the words from Romans 8:38 and 39:

Rom 8:38 For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels,
nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,
Rom 8:39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be
able to separate us from God's love, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

No matter how bad things appear, God will never leave nor forsake us, and this life is only very temporary, so if you try to compare the eternal and incredible future that is our guaranteed inheritance, with our present troubles, there is no way to measure them together. It is like trying to compare the size of our sun to the size of an orange. It is simply so different that you cannot compare the two.

The Apostle Paul's Experiences

When Paul was writing about these sufferings he was not living somewhere in comfort, but he was in the very thick of these troubles. There are few people who have suffered as much as Paul in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. We can read of some things he had to endure as he spread the gospel in 2 Corinthians 11 and verses 24 to 27.

2Co 11:24 Five times from the Jews I received forty stripes minus one.

2Co 11:25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I suffered shipwreck. I have been a night and a day in the deep.

2Co 11:26 I have been in travels often, perils of rivers, perils of robbers, perils from my countrymen, perils from the Gentiles, perils in the city, perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea, perils among false brothers;

2Co 11:27 in labor and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, and in cold and nakedness.

Even though he suffered so much, Paul can see a future where he will forget all the evil that he has experienced. This is also a warning for us to not give up if the going gets tough, this is when we must remain faithful and hold on to our inheritance. We must trust God and remember His words in Romans 8:28.

Rom 8:28 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.

“In all things” means just what it says. In good times and in bad, when everything seems to be against us, when we are suffering. When, and if our lives are in danger and we cannot understand God’s ultimate plan for us, this is when we must trust Him all the more.

Returning to Romans 8 and verses 19 and 20.

Rom 8:19 For the creation waits with eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.

Rom 8:20 For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but because of him who subjected it, in hope

Creation would have been subjected to frustration when Adam and Eve sinned, and God cursed the ground. NOTICE that the creation was subjected to frustration, so someone greater than the creation itself caused it to happen. Only God could have done this, because we know Jesus is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

So if Jesus holds all things together, then the world could not possibly have been subjected to anything without His knowledge and approval. Therefore, it could only be God who subjected creation to its present condition. But it was Adam's sin, and not God's will, that was the direct and special cause of creation being subjected to frustration.

And it will be God who changes these conditions and frees our world from the decay that it is now going through. In the next verse, we see when this liberation from decay will happen.

Rom 8:21 that the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of decay into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

Notice that creation is to be liberated, set free, from its bondage or slavery to decay, that means no more decay, no more killer earthquakes, floods, and every other thing that causes disasters in our present world. Continuing in verse 22.

Rom 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.

So creation has been groaning because of the decay from the time of Adam up to the time of Paul's writing and right up to the present time. That groaning and decay gives us all the disasters from natural occurrences that have caused so much pain and suffering from the time of Adam until today.

The last part of verse 20 says that creation was subjected in hope. And just what is this hope Paul was referring to.

Let us continue reading in verses 23 to 25 for the answer

Rom 8:23 Not only so, but ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for adoption, the redemption of our body.

Rom 8:24 For we were saved in hope, but hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for that which he sees?

Rom 8:25 But if we hope for that which we don't see, we wait for it with patience.

So we must wait for the redemption of our bodies with patience, and when this finally happens then creation itself will also be redeemed, Because all creation was subjected to decay, corruption and futility because of man's sin, it will also be freed from these conditions with the ultimate redemption of men.

And the ultimate redemption of men will occur when our Lord and Saviour returns, this is when the earth will no longer be subject to corruption.

Who here is not waiting for their adoption to be a son or daughter of God and to arrive at the time of the redemption of our bodies?

We do not know how long we must wait, but the wait will be worth it and as Paul also said in

2Co 4:17 For our light affliction, which is for the moment, works for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory;

2Co 4:18 while we don't look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Earlier we read about just how much Paul had suffered, yet here he declares it is light and momentary troubles. If we compare our troubles with Paul's, then we have nothing to complain about. We just have to keep in mind what Paul wrote for us in

Rom 8:28 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.

The Apostle Peter agrees with Paul that our suffering will only be for a

short period, and we can read this in 1 Peter verse 3 to 7.

1Pe 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

1Pe 1:4 to an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance that doesn't fade away, reserved in Heaven for you,

1Pe 1:5 who by the power of God are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1Pe 1:6 Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been put to grief in various trials,

1Pe 1:7 that the proof of your faith, which is more precious than gold that perishes even though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ—

Notice we have a living hope, our inheritance is secure, salvation is ready to be revealed, suffering is a part of life and our faithfulness to Jesus will result in praise, glory and Honor when He returns.

The Old Testament Agrees

Even the old testament hints about the future and how good it will be. In Isaiah 11 verses 1 to 5 we read about the return of Jesus and then verses 6 to 11 we see a glimpse of the future.

Isa 11:1 A shoot will come out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots will bear fruit.

Isa 11:2 Yahweh's Spirit will rest on him: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Yahweh.

Isa 11:3 His delight will be in the fear of Yahweh. He will not judge by the sight of his eyes, neither decide by the hearing of his ears;

Isa 11:4 but with righteousness he will judge the poor, and decide with equity for the humble of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips he will kill the wicked.

Isa 11:5 Righteousness will be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his waist.

This is the time of the return of Jesus to this sorry old world of ours. When we keep reading, we see a very different world to the one that we live in today. As we read these next 4 verses, try to imagine a world where these things are happening.

Isa 11:6 The wolf will live with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat; The calf, the young lion, and the fattened calf together; and a little child will lead them.

Isa 11:7 The cow and the bear will graze. Their young ones will lie down together. The lion will eat straw like the ox.

Isa 11:8 The nursing child will play near a cobra's hole, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.

Isa 11:9 They will not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of Yahweh, as the waters cover the sea.

That is a prophecy for the time of our Lord's return, I can't imagine these things right now, but can you imagine a time when mum will tell her kids. "please

give me some peace and quiet, go and play with the lions, go and look at the cobras, but do not hurt them!”

I think we will have the same attitude as Paul and Peter when Jesus has returned to this weary old world. We can see in Romans 8 and verse 21 that creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay, and we will see the prophesy of Isaiah that we just read fulfilled.

When we see that the problems of the world are all caused by sin entering the world, by Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit, then I think we can just start to see just how destructive sin is and how God views it. It is so against His holy way of life that He has to show us just what it has caused.

So much destruction starting from that 1 sin. And of course since then the sins of this world have been mounting up and the evil that man can commit against his fellow man, and against God, are just getting worse by the day.

God is Sovereign

There is no part of creation that is not under the control of God. He is sovereign over all creation. God did not create everything and then sit back in His throne and watch to see what might happen. Creation does not operate independently of the Creator; rather, it responds to and obeys His command.

So when creation was subjected to frustration, it could only be by the hand of God. And the reason it was subjected was due entirely to sin.

So all the problems that humanity faces today are a direct result of sin. It does not matter if it is man's broken relationship with God, or the decaying of our planet that causes earthquakes and tsunamis, every evil thing that happens is due to sin entering the world.

We cannot, and must not, blame God for these troubles, we have brought them onto ourselves because we have separated ourselves, and nature, from our Creator. Our sins have caused these tragic occurrences to impact so dramatically on what God created and what He thought was "Very Good".

Many of those created in "God's own image" are living according to the flesh and are not living according to the Spirit.

Our current problems with moral and natural disasters will continue until our Lord Jesus returns to set things straight. All we can do for now is to pray for that day, or as it is written in.

Rev 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" He who hears, let him say, "Come!" He who is thirsty, let him come. He who desires, let him take the water of life freely.

And then the last two verses in the bible

Rev 22:20 He who testifies these things says, "Yes, I come quickly." Amen! Yes, come, Lord Jesus.

Rev 22:21 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints.
Amen.

How should we respond to natural disasters?

So as we wait for the return of our Lord, we will witness many more of these examples of the corruption of the earth, so how should we respond to these times of pain and suffering?

When a disaster strikes, it can be too easy to give up and feel powerless in the face of a major calamity. Where do we start?, what can we as individuals do to help in times of disasters?.

We who live here in Western Australia are blessed, because we have never experienced these things. How do we help those who have lost everything, including friends and families, homes and livelihoods, to carry on after the event?

I think we see so much misery on our TV sets every night, that we are becoming hardened to them, we are no longer shocked by what we see, but most times we shrug if off as just another disaster that has occurred somewhere else in the world. I know we can never solve the problems ourselves, but just how should we respond.

I think the first thing we must do is to remember that God has promised to never leave us, not forsake us, so we must learn to rely on Him. We should pray for those who are suffering and pray that help will arrive in time to help the victims.

It was Martin Luther who said, “When you look around and wonder whether God cares, you must always hurry to the cross and you must see Him there.”

This must be our first reaction, not asking why it has happened, because we do not have the mind of God, but trust that He knows His plan and He will carry it out. We must remember that Jesus suffered for all of us, so He knows what we are going through.

The disaster relief organizations around the world also need our prayers, not only for them to give the help required, but that they themselves will be protected

from any harm as they help those who are in need.

We know that we have received amazing grace from God, so we should react to help those in need regardless of who they are, their colour or religion. We are all loved by God and He dwells in every one of us. So we must react accordingly.

Our work as God's sons and daughters will not always be easy. Paul's comments in 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and verses 4 to 10 spell out this fact:

2Co 6:4 but in everything commending ourselves, as servants of God,
in great endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses,
2Co 6:5 in beatings, in imprisonments, in riots, in labors, in watchings,
in fastings;
2Co 6:6 in pureness, in knowledge, in perseverance, in kindness, in the
Holy Spirit, in sincere love,
2Co 6:7 in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the armor of
righteousness on the right hand and on the left,
2Co 6:8 by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as
deceivers, and yet true;
2Co 6:9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we
live; as punished, and not killed;
2Co 6:10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many
rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

In good times and bad times we should always keep our eyes on Jesus, the perfecter and finisher of our faith.

Worse Things Are Yet To Come.

We do not know when the end of this age will come, but we know that there will be many troubles coming and indeed, the worst is yet to come.

We are all aware of Mat 24:21 and 22.

Mat 24:21 for then there will be great oppression, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever will be.

Mat 24:22 Unless those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved. But for the sake of the chosen ones, those days will be shortened.

During the times of the cold war. How many of us thought that MAT 24:22 referred to the USA and Asian countries throwing nukes at each other that would bring about the end of all life on earth.

And now we see other world powers flexing their muscles again and talking of increasing their supply of weapons of mass destruction. Let's hope that they are aware that there is no winner in a war with nuclear weapons. There are enough of these types of weapons in the world right now to kill us all several times over, so why make more?

The rest of this message is my own personal theory. You may or may not agree. That is fine by me, I just hope it will at least get you thinking.

So now let us look at Luke 21:25 and 26

Luk 21:25 There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars; and on the earth anxiety of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the waves;

Luk 21:26 men fainting for fear, and for expectation of the things

which are coming on the world: for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

This is obviously a time of violent disturbances of the earth and the heavens. If the seas are roaring and tossing, then this is more than likely caused by the earth groaning as it awaits the redemption of humanity.

And if the heavenly bodies are being shaken, it will be no wonder that men are faint with terror, this is obviously a major event and maybe the earth and everything in it is about to be finished, maybe this is when Mat 24:21 is about to happen, maybe this is the end of all humanity. Maybe if the last part of Mat 24:22 is not played out, then maybe this is the end of human history on this earth. But we have the promise of God that those days will be cut short.

Let us now read the very next verse.

Luk 21:27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

So our Lord's return will be the event that cuts those days short. When our Lord returns to this weary old world of ours, He will stop the world from tearing itself apart. I think that this is when we will see the creation liberated from decay as we saw earlier in Rom 8:21.

Rom 8:21 that the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of decay into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

What would convince this world that the returning Jesus is God? Bringing peace to this world that has seen so much fighting would be an incredible start, but the doubters would still be saying. "If we just had more time, we would have brought peace to the world with a one government system".

Even if humanity was to bring peace to the world, how could they stop all the other problems that we face. People would still hate and murder, and every other crime that we have today would still exist. No, it will take much more than the efforts of humankind to bring about true peace and happiness for all people.

What man could stop earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes, tsunami's, etc. If they will need more proof that God exists, then what more powerful way to do just this than by stopping these things from occurring.

We know Jesus calmed the stormy sea when He was here on earth, but this time it will be a greater display of His power that will convince all people of just who He is. And it will not be just a few disciples that will witness these events, but it will be the entire population of the world.

So, that is my theory and you are welcome to agree with it, or reject the idea. At the start of this message, I do not have the mind of God; I do not understand His plans, God's thoughts and ways are way above mine, so you will have to make up your own minds about these things. (SORRY)

My last scripture for today comes from Isaiah 25:8-9:

Isa 25:8 He has swallowed up death forever! The Lord Yahweh will wipe away tears from off all faces. He will take the reproach of his people away from off all the earth, for Yahweh has spoken it.

Isa 25:9 It shall be said in that day, "Behold, this is our God! We have waited for him, and he will save us! This is Yahweh! We have waited for him. We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation!"

Amen to that, and thanks for reading, and may God bless you.

Autobiography

My name is Leslie Rendell and I am simply a normal Christian who has had no formal religious education. There are no letters after my name to convince you I realize what I am writing about. I sincerely search the Bible for the information I need.

I am retired and now live in the South West of Western Australia. Apart from my love of the Bible, my other hobbies are vegetable growing, using the hydroponic method and photography where I love to photograph God's creation.

When I am doing my Bible studies, I do not just read the Bible, but I select a topic that I want to know more about (such as the rapture) then I spend my time researching it in the Bible and also on the "World Wide Web". I like to see what other people are saying on that subject, whether or not I agree with them. I believe it is vital to see all sides of an argument before accepting one as the truth on the matter.

Once I have decided on what I believe is right, then I search the scriptures to back up what I think is correct. I find this a great way to study as I can concentrate on one subject at a time.

Saviou