

What example does Jesus give us for our own suffering?

1. He committed no sin.
2. No deceit was found in his mouth.
3. He did not retaliate.

How can we possibly do all this? **We trust God.**

V. Conclusion

An example: slander by a neighbor

I could never believe in God, if it were not for the cross...In the real world of pain, how could one worship a god who was immune to it? I have entered many Buddhist temples in different Asian countries and stood respectfully before the statue of Buddha, his legs crossed, arms folded, eyes closed, the ghost of a smile playing round his mouth, a remote look on his face, detached from the agonies of the world. But each time after a while I have to turn away. And in imagination I have turned instead to that lonely, twisted, tortured figure on the cross, nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn-pricks, mouth dry and intolerably thirsty, plunged in God-forsaken darkness. That is the God for me! He laid aside his immunity to pain. He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death. He suffered for us. Our sufferings become more manageable in light of his.
– John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*

Questions? [Give Email addresses of teachers]

Next Week: Week 5: Unbiblical Reactions to Suffering

Core Seminars—Suffering for God’s Glory **Class 4: God’s Grief over Suffering**



The empathy of a suffering God

I. Introduction

The importance of the Scriptures and biblical (spiritual) thinking—rational vs spiritual thought.

Question: how does the fact that Christ suffered help us in our own suffering?

II. The Cross: Where Love and Justice Meet

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

– 2 Cor. 5:21

When we suffer, we need mercy *and* justice. Because of Christ’s death, a just God shows mercy to us.

III. Comfort in God's Empathy

¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb 4: 14-16 ESV)

Four ways in which God's empathy provides comfort:

1. **Jesus understands our weakness.**

Reading the Psalms as by or about Jesus (Charles Drew, *The Ancient Love Song: Finding Christ in the Old Testament*)

2. **Jesus was tempted in every way that we are . . .**

Use Jesus' understanding of your temptation in suffering to trust his wisdom in placing you there.

3. **. . . yet without sin**

4. **We can persevere in prayer for help.**

➔ **We can trust.** ("hold firmly to the faith we profess")

*"If we...ask the question: 'Why does God allow evil and suffering to continue?' and we look at the cross of Jesus, we still do not know what the answer is. However, we know what the answer isn't. It can't be that he doesn't love us. It can't be that He is indifferent or detached from our condition. God takes our misery and suffering so seriously that he was willing to take it on himself...So, if we embrace the Christian teaching that Jesus is God and that he went to the Cross, then we have deep consolation and strength to face the brutal realities of life on earth" - Tim Keller, *The Reason for God*, page 31*

IV. **Jesus' Suffering is an Example for Us** (though not *merely* an example)

"²⁰But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. ²¹For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps. ²²He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."