

# God In Suffering

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Sunday, 28 December 2008

Where is God in suffering? The answer that this question poses is perhaps the greatest scandal of all time. God's response to our suffering was to suffer Himself so we don't have to (in the eternal sense). It is interesting to consider that when one-third of the angels fell God did nothing. However, when all of humanity turned their back on God, and basically said, "No thank You" to His desire for relationship with us, God responded with the passion of a jealous lover. In Genesis 6:6 we are told that God's heart was deeply pained over our rejection of Him. Yet He answered the brokenness in His own heart, and He answered the problem of our sin and suffering, by pursuing us in love unto death! Jesus' mission statement pointedly personifies the jealous heart of our Bridegroom God, "I have come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10)."

So to answer the question "where is God in our suffering?" I would suggest He was on the earth hanging on a cross bearing the shame and punishment for every evil, vile thing ever committed by mankind, that He might forgive, redeem, and reconcile us in our fallenness to a Holy God. "Where is God in our suffering?" He is on the earth in the form of His Holy Spirit convicting the world of sin, righteousness and justice, as well as comforting those who turn to God and not away from Him in their affliction. "Where is God in our suffering?" He is in heaven preparing a place to reward those who lived for Him, even through the midst of trial, tribulation, and suffering. "Where is God in our suffering?" He is in hell preparing the flames of eternal judgment to exact vengeance on those who violate His moral commandments in their perpetration of evil, injustice, violence, and immorality. "Where is God in our suffering?" He is in the heart of every believer in Christ, sustaining them in a fallen world through His indescribable joy, hope, peace, and love.

Why did God do it? I find it interesting that many of us are quick to call God into question when considering the negative things we observe or have experienced in our fallen culture, yet rarely attribute glory to Him when observing the positive. Rather than preoccupy ourselves with what we perceive God isn't doing, we should consider what God has done, and is doing. The question I often ponder is, "why did God do it?" When I see a nursing child, a rainbow on the horizon, a missionary lay their life down for the poor and insignificant, a father fishing with his son, and all the beautiful things that surround us every day — I am provoked to ask, "Why did You do it God? Why did you create the rainbow? Why did You design a child to nurse from its mother's breast? Why do dolphins smile?" These questions open my heart to hear things I would have never expected, such as, "because I knew it would make you smile, to fill your heart with awe, and just because I can." It is apparent to those who are looking, that the glory of the Lord is covering the earth as the waters cover the sea. May God give us eyes to see and ears to hear.

The nature of God and His Kingdom &ndash; Let us now take a moment to consider the nature of God and His Kingdom. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians that Jesus Christ is the expressed &ldquo;image of God,&rdquo; and that &ldquo;it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:4,6)&rdquo; And Jesus Himself declared to His disciples, &ldquo;He who has seen Me has seen the Father&hellip; (John 14:9).&rdquo; Jesus perfectly represented His Father in everything He did, exemplifying to us who God is and what He is like. In Acts 10:38 we are told that &ldquo;God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.&rdquo; In Romans the Apostle Paul characterized &ldquo;the kingdom of God&rdquo; as &ldquo;righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 14:17)&rdquo; And the Psalmist described the foundations of God&rsquo;s throne as &ldquo;righteousness and justice (Ps. 97:2).&rdquo; When Jesus began His public ministry He opened His mouth declaring the inauguration of the kingdom of God. He then demonstrated through His words and actions what that kingdom is like, and what God is like. His ministry on earth was, in essence, a down payment of the age to come, and gave us clear insight into the nature of that kingdom and the nature of God. The reason Jesus is called the &ldquo;hope of glory&rdquo; is because although this age is characterized by violence, injustice, and suffering, when Christ returns He will establish His kingdom in righteousness and justice, pervaded by peace, love and joy. May we rejoice in the hope of our salvation for &ldquo;Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable. (Ps. 145:3)&rdquo;