

WHY DO CHRISTIANS SUFFER TRIBULATIONS?

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Introduction: at one time or another most, if not all Christians ask; why does our loving and powerful God allow His people to suffer one tribulation or the other? Why would a good and loving God allow us to go through such things as death of a child, diseases and injury to ourselves and loved ones, financial hardship, worry and fear? We will argue, surely if He loved us, He would take all of these things away from us.

We will not have the complete answers to these questions as mortals, but the bible, God's infallible word, does shed much light on the reasons why Christians suffer tribulations – (pressures on both the body and soul), anguish of all kinds, poverty, famine and nakedness, peril (danger), persecution (unjust treatment) and even the “sword” of the executioner (**Romans 8:35**).

Many think that when they receive the Lord Jesus Christ, all their problems are over, but God never said that Christians would not suffer in this life. The Lord Jesus did say, “*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you ^[a]will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*”.

The Origin Of Suffering

The truth is that God did not intend tribulation for His children. God's original creation didn't contain these pains. The world God created was peaceful and beautiful. Food was easy to come by. There was no death, people were intended to have a close and personal relationship with God. God gave man freewill and choices – **Genesis 2:17**. When our ancestors, Adam and Eve, chose the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they chose to disobey God. In doing so, they chose this chaotic world and all the problems we have today. In the world they chose, there was cause and effect (consequences). Bad decisions now can have far reaching effects on generations yet unborn. Today, we inherited this painful world as a result of the action of our ancestors but not their sins as some wrongly believe.

Whether you are in the middle of trial now or in a period of relative peace, in life, it is important to understand why suffering exists at all. It is a fallout of the action of Adam and Eve and it is universal in application, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God had a taste of the suffering even to the point of death.

Moving from general to the specifics, the question now is “*Why do we suffer tribulations when we are Christians?*”

1. We suffer because we live in a fallen world where sin reigns in the heart of men.
2. We suffer because of our own foolishness. We reap what we sow – **Genesis 6:7-9.**
3. We sometimes suffer because it's God discipline “*For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And scourges every son whom He receives*” – **Hebrews 12:6.**
4. We may suffer persecution because of our faith – especially when we take a stand on biblical issues i.e. suffering for righteousness sake – **2 Timothy 3:12.**
5. We suffer to share in the suffering of Christ and be more like Him. Christians persecuted for their faith share in what Paul calls “*the fellowship of His suffering*” – **Philippians 3:10.**
When we suffer it also enable us to comfort others who suffer. Paul writes “*for our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of*” – **2 Corinthians 4:17.**
6. We suffer to grow spiritually. Jesus “*learned*” obedience through suffering even though perfect in humanity. Paul’s “*thorn in the flesh*” he wrote, is designed to keep him from boasting – **2 Corinthians 12:7.**
7. We suffer to better anticipate the glories of heaven and the world to come. In **Revelation 21:4**, we read, “*He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.*” Paul writes, “*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*” – **Romans 8:18.**

What to do when we are faced with tribulations as Christians.

What is a Christian to do when faced with disappointment, disaster and despair? Scripture teaches us that “*all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose*” – **Romans 8:28.** As Christians, our response in time of trials make all the

difference. The following responses are keys to enduring tests and trails through God's grace:

1. Give Thanks

Sometimes being thankful in a difficult situation is the most difficult thing you can do. Yet, scripture is very clear about this response: *"in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"* – **1 Thessalonians 5:18**. To be thankful rather than to complain takes a conscious act of the will and a sacrifice of natural desires – **Psalms 107:22**. Unfortunately, most of us respond with murmuring or complaining when we face hardship of any kind – **Philippians 2:13-15**.

2. Rejoice

Along with giving thanks, we also are instructed to rejoice in all things: *"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!"* – **Philippians 4:4**. Therefore it is possible to be sad and joyful at the same time. We cannot escape the pain of a difficult situation but we can learn to rejoice in God Himself and in good things God will do through our suffering.

3. Believe and Act on the Word of God

When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, He responded to each temptation by quoting scriptures. For example, when Satan urged Christ to turn stones to bread, Jesus quoted from **Deuteronomy 8:3** *"He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you [a] understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord"*. **Matthew 4:4** *"But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"*

4. Overcome evil with good

Jesus gave the disciples a clear sets of instructions about responding to those who made life miserable for them – **Matthew 5:44** *"But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"*. These instructions are completely opposite to what we would naturally do:

- a. Love your enemy
- b. Bless those who curse you

- c. Do good to those who hate you
- d. Pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. God promise to give a blessing to those who reward evil with good – **1 Peter 3:8-9**
“⁸ [a]To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; ⁹ not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but [b]giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing”.

Conclusion

We have found some reasons why Christians suffer. There are two main reasons: suffering for wrong done (**Proverbs 3:12,13; 13:24; 1 Corinthians 11:28-32; Hebrews 12:4-13**) and suffering as a Christian – **1 Peter 2:19-21, 4:13-16**. Our reaction to suffering is often negative, doubting and blaming God. Some stress and testing is good for us, but if we handle it by blaming and doubting God, it is sin. Repent of it!!!

And finally, we are assured that compared to eternity, our suffering is but for a short while, and that it is not at all comparable with the glory which will be revealed in us. He is preparing a mansion for you and me, and will soon come for us. He will lift the curse from all creation and make all things new including our physical bodies. There will be no suffering in eternity. Let us trust and serve God now, inspite of problems, trials, tribulations, heartache and suffering so that we will not be ashamed at His coming. Our suffering will pass and eternity will follow! Everything will be fine.