

# The Presence of Pain and a Pandemic

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NOTE: Lesson resources and the video lesson can be accessed at  
<https://www.roomfordoubt.com/worldview-camp-2020/>.

## **Introduction:**

- A. Some things just smack you in the face. They don't just happen *to others*; they now dominate *your life* because *you* are directly involved.
- B. All of this can have a major effect on how we see God and on our relationship with God.
  - 1. How could God allow this?
  - 2. Why would God allow this?
  - 3. Where is God anyway?
  - 4. How are we supposed to think about this, and respond to this, from a Christian perspective?

## **C. Mistaken perceptions of God:**

- 1. God causes our pain and our pandemic: He seems \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2. God can't do anything in our world (cf. Deism): He seems \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3. God can, but doesn't, do anything: He seems \_\_\_\_\_.

## **D. Types of Evil (pain and suffering):**

- 1. Moral: The consequences of human decision.
- 2. Natural: The consequences of nature's regularity or uniformity.
- E. This lesson: Try to answer some **big questions** and offer guidance on how you can think about, and respond to, the presence of pain and a pandemic in your world.

## **I. Human Freedom Creates Pain & Suffering.**

- A. Big question: Why didn't God just create a world without any human pain? Well, He \_\_\_\_\_ (Gen. 1-2).
- B. Big question: What changed? The sinful use of human \_\_\_\_\_.
- C. Big question: WHY did God give human freedom?
  - 1. To make genuine \_\_\_\_\_ possible.
  - 2. Genuine love requires \_\_\_\_\_.
  - 3. Freedom allows devastating \_\_\_\_\_.

## **II. Natural Law Creates Pain and Suffering.**

- A. Natural Law: The regularities of nature (natural causes and effects) that we can discover.
- B. Natural Evil: Pain and suffering that results from the uniform operation of nature—"natural law" (e.g. floods, hurricanes, fire, earthquakes, etc.).

### C. Big question: **Why would God set up natural laws?**

#### 1. To make the “**Dominion Mandate**” possible (Gen. 1:26).

**Gen 1:26** Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

- a. God wanted humans to rule over life and the world.
  - b. Such supervision requires uniformity of the natural world.
  - c. Uniformity (natural law) makes prediction and control possible.
  - d. Natural laws make science possible. (God wanted us to have science!)
- 2. To make **moral accountability** possible.
    - a. If we are to be responsible for our actions, we must be able to predict the consequences of those actions and make rational decisions based on the orderliness of nature.
    - b. Without nature’s laws, there can be no moral accountability. Without moral accountability, there can be nothing morally good.
  - 3. To make “normal” daily life possible.

#### D. Big question: WHY is there “natural evil” (pain and suffering from natural processes)?

- 1. The fallenness of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. The misuse of human freedom not only devastated our relationship with God, with others, and with ourselves.
  - b. Human sin also devastated nature.
- 2. The fallenness of \_\_\_\_\_ (Gen. 3:16-19; Rom. 8:18-22).

**Rom. 8:19-22** <sup>19</sup>For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup>For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

- 3. The fallenness of \_\_\_\_\_ (Satan).
  - c. There is a “cosmic conflict” (Isa. 14:12-15; Lk. 10:17-18; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6; Eph. 2:2; 6:12; Rev. 12:3-4,7-17).
  - d. Job suffered because of Satan’s activity (Job 1).
  - e. Satan: “the ruler of this world” (Jn. 14:30); the “god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4); “the ruler of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2); “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one” (1 Jn. 5:19).
  - f. 73 references to “demons” in the New Testament (e.g. Matt. 8:16,28-34).

### III. Big Question: Why does God Allow Our Pain and our Pandemic?

- A. God valued human freedom, which eventually led to pain and suffering. (See above.)
- B. God established natural laws to make moral accountability and predictable life possible, even though they also make human suffering inevitable. (See above.)
- C. God can make \_\_\_\_\_ come from it (Rom. 8:28; Gen. 50:20; Phil. 1:12-14).

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

**Gen. 50:20** As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

**Phil. 1:12-14** <sup>12</sup>I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, <sup>13</sup>so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. <sup>14</sup>And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

- D. We can learn greater \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g. Luke 10: The Good Samaritan).
- E. We can face our finiteness and our destiny of \_\_\_\_\_ (Heb. 9:27).
- F. We can become more \_\_\_\_\_ on God through trials (Rom. 5:3-5; James 1:2-4; 2 Cor. 1:8-9; Matt. 8:23-27 Jesus calming the storm).

**Rom. 5:3-5** <sup>3</sup>Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup>and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup>and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

**James 1:2-4** <sup>2</sup>Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, <sup>3</sup>for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. <sup>4</sup>And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

**2 Cor. 1:8-9** <sup>8</sup>For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. <sup>9</sup>Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.

- G. We can pursue deeper spiritual reflection and be prompted to \_\_\_\_\_  
(Lk. 13:4-5).

**Lk. 13:4-5** <sup>4</sup>Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? <sup>5</sup>No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

#### **IV. God's Action Against Evil, Pain, and Pandemics.**

- A. The **past**: God has acted to resolve evil, pain, and suffering.
1. The biblical story of God's redemption.
  2. The coming and crucifixion of Jesus.
    - a. Jesus suffered.
    - b. It was not possible for God to care for sin without suffering (Mk 14:35-36; Matt 26:39; Lk 22:42).

**Matt 26:39** <sup>39</sup>And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

B. The **present**.

1. The Bible clearly highlights the inevitability of suffering (e.g. Job, Jesus, John the Baptist; Paul (2 Cor 11:23-27)).
2. God knows and He cares (1 Pet. 5:6-7).

**1 Pet. 5:6-7** <sup>6</sup>Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, <sup>7</sup>casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

C. The **future**: All pain must be seen in light of God's eternal plan (2 Cor. 4:7-9,17-18; Rom. 8:18; Rev. 21:1-4).

**2 Cor 4:7-9,17-18** <sup>7</sup>But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. <sup>8</sup>We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; <sup>9</sup>persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;... <sup>17</sup>For this light momentary

affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,<sup>18</sup> as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

**Rom. 8:18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

**Rev. 21:4** He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

## Your Actions & Reactions

**A. Persevere** (see point III.F. above).

**B. Pray** (Eph. 6:16-18), **but ...** Matt. 26:38-39 and 2 Cor 12:7-9.

1. Natural law cannot prohibit God's miraculous actions.
2. God wants us to pray, but don't measure God's faithfulness by your specific prayers for release from pain or a pandemic (e.g. Jesus, Paul).

**Eph. 6:16-20** <sup>16</sup> In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;<sup>17</sup> and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,<sup>18</sup> **praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance**, making supplication for all the saints.

**Jesus in Matt. 26:38-39** <sup>38</sup> Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." <sup>39</sup> And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, **if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.**"

**Paul in 2 Cor 12:7-10** <sup>7</sup> So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, **a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.** <sup>8</sup> Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. <sup>9</sup> But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup> For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

**C. Protect and provide** for others.

**D. Trust God's plan and His providence.**

1. God does not specifically cause pain and pandemics.
2. But God will faithfully care for you!