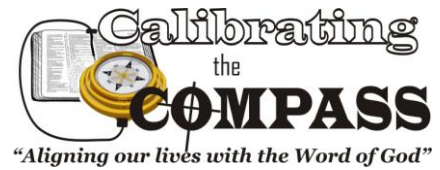




# Sermon Notes

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### When the Needle Spins out of Control- Making Sense of the Un-sensible. *Gen 3:17-24*

A ten year old asks, “Why me,” when he shuts his hand up in a car door. A mother asks, “Why,” when her child is struck with an illness. A man in his prime is struck with a debilitating disease which robs him of his vitality. A husband has a heart attack and has to retire from work. We could go on and on with real life situations that illustrate suffering. You could give your own real life examples of suffering.

Sometimes it seems like our compass is spinning out of control. How do we make sense of the un-sensible? Suffering is something that touches all our lives at one time or another. Sometimes it simply does not make sense. How can we make sense of the un-sensible? How can we begin to understand the causes and purposes of troubles in our lives? How can we stop the spinning or at least grow from it?

*Genesis 3:17-24 “And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; <sup>18</sup> Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; <sup>19</sup> In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. <sup>20</sup> And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. <sup>21</sup> Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them. <sup>22</sup> And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: <sup>23</sup> Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. <sup>24</sup> So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”*

#### I- Causes for Suffering:

Who can we find that might bear the blame for suffering? Let me suggest:

**A- Blame it on Adam- *Gen 3:17-24*** Humans by the choices of Adam chose to sin. This makes sickness, disease, accidents and even death a part of life for all.

***Romans 5:12; 15 “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned...15***



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*But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.”*

Did you notice that the word “offense,” is singular? By one offense, the fall, all became sinners.

**B- Blame it on Me-** Sometimes we make decisions that cause us to suffer. Am momma would say, “You burned the blister now sit on it.”

Let me however give a strong warning before we go to saying all suffering is because of sin. We have two biblical accounts that dispel this myth.

*Job 2:1-7 “ Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. <sup>2</sup> And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. <sup>3</sup> And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. <sup>4</sup> And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. <sup>5</sup> But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. <sup>7</sup> So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.”*

*Job 1:22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*

*John 9:1-3 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. <sup>2</sup> And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

Job’s suffering was to prove his faith and bring glory to God. The man born blind was for the purpose that the, “...works of God should be made manifest in him.”

Still we must realize that personal sin leads to sickness and suffering. A biblical illustration of this is the story of Ananias and Sapphira who’s sin caused their death. (see Acts 5:1ff)



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**C- Blame it on Them-** *2 Timothy 3:12* says, “*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*” Sometimes our suffering in life is caused by others who oppose the gospel.

**D- Blame it on God-** As we have stated man made the choice to sin. Still there are many who blame it one God. It is His fault when someone suffers. They say, “how can a loving God allow so much suffering to go on in the world.”

Allow me to poorly illustrate how we cannot blame a lot of suffering on God. When we send food aid to a lot of countries the food is stolen and placed in the black market for sale. Children die because food was stolen by men. Can we blame God fro this? I say no.

I have often thought that we in our comfort have not really suffered for the cause of Christ. This becomes more real when we look at the early church.

At the Nicene Council, an important church meeting in the 4th century A.D., of the 318 delegates attending, fewer than 12 had not lost an eye or lost a hand or did not limp on a leg lamed by torture for their Christian faith. (Vance Havner.)

## II- Purposes of Suffering:

Still we have a God who is Sovereign. We also know that we have a loving heavenly Father. Because He is Sovereign and loving there must be a purpose to the suffering not just a cause. Gregg R. Albers, M.D. in *counseling the Sick and Terminally Ill* states, “The cause of disease is not as important as its spiritual outcome.” (p 76)

Someone asked C.S. Lewis, "Why do the righteous suffer?" "Why not?" he replied. "They're the only ones who can take it."

**A- Suffering is used of God to mature believers.** We have to climb in the valleys and slip off the mountain. Many children as well as adults are afraid of mountain roads. The reason is once we are on the mountain there is only one way to go, down.

Suffering can refine our faith. *1 Peter 1:5-7* “*Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. <sup>6</sup> Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: <sup>7</sup> That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*”



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Suffering can also produce patience, perseverance, character and maturity. Notice *James 1:2-3* “*My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; <sup>3</sup> Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.*”

Also notice with me *Romans 5:3-5* “*And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; <sup>4</sup> And patience, experience; and experience, hope: <sup>5</sup> And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*”

Suffering is also used of God to conform us to the image of Christ. *Romans 8:28-29* “*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*”

Suffering is God’s way of preparing us for heaven. Let me use a story to illustrate this.

A famous evangelist told the following incident: I have a friend who in a time of business recession lost his job, a sizable fortune, and his beautiful home. To add to his sorrow, his precious wife died; yet he tenaciously held to his faith -- the only thing he had left. One day when he was out walking in search of employment, he stopped to watch some men who were doing stonework on a large church. One of them was chiseling a triangular piece of rock. 'Where are you going to put that?' he asked. The workman said, 'Do you see that little opening up there near the spire? Well, I'm shaping this stone down here so that it will fit in up there.' Tears filled my friend's eyes as he walked away, for the Lord had spoken to him through that laborer whose words gave new meaning to his troubled situation. *Our Daily Bread*.

**B- Suffering is used by God to equip us to help others. *2 Corinthians 1:3-4* “*Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; <sup>4</sup> Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*”**

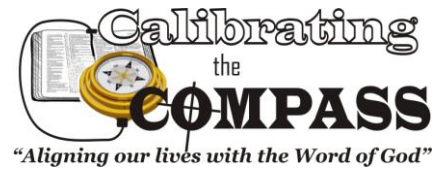
We have two words that apply here, Sympathy and Empathy. Sympathy is feeling sorry without have been there. Empathy is understanding because of your experience of suffering. God gives us a stewardship of our suffering to be used for



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others. When the compass spins out of control, sometimes it is so that can point to someone we can help. Our struggle help us have strength we need for others.

A man found a cocoon of the emperor moth and took it home to watch it emerge. One day a small opening appeared, and for several hours the moth struggled but couldn't seem to force its body past a certain point.

Deciding something was wrong, the man took scissors and snipped the remaining bit of cocoon. The moth emerged easily, its body large and swollen, the wings small and shriveled.

He expected that in a few hours the wings would spread out in their natural beauty, but they did not. Instead of developing into a creature free to fly, the moth spent its life dragging around a swollen body and shriveled wings.

The constricting cocoon and the struggle necessary to pass through the tiny opening are God's way of forcing fluid from the body into the wings. The "merciful" snip was, in reality, cruel. Sometimes the struggle is exactly what we need. (Beth Landers.)

**C- Suffering is a means God uses to show our mortality and need of Him. James 5:14-15** *"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: <sup>15</sup> And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."*

Suffering and disease have caused many men to stop and consider their eternal destiny. Many stories are told of death bed professions of faith. By the way the thief on the cross had such a conversion. *Psalms 119:71* **"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes."**

### III- Conclusion:

We can say that the Scriptures suggests that God allows suffering for three reasons: people are humbled and see their need of Christ for salvation; to help believers to grow and be more like Christ; and to help equip us to minister to others. We also must realize that no matter how bleak the outlook the uplook is always bright. Remember the words of *Romans 8:18* **"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."**