



“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...” Matthew 28:20

Church of Christ • 13800 S. 4080 Road • P.O. Box 527 • Oologah, Oklahoma 74053

Dealing With Pain and Suffering

Jeremy Northrop

One of the more difficult things for people is the presence of pain and suffering in our world. This issue is one that has both destroyed and strengthened the faith of Christians around the world. We all know true stories of pain and suffering in our lives or in the lives of those close to us. Sometimes we can easily understand the purpose and meaning of these things and sometimes we cannot.

Pain has always been a part of the world. Adam and Eve surely felt pain when Cain killed Abel (Genesis 4:25). Job felt pain when all his earthly possessions were taken away and his children were killed (Job 1:13-19). Paul wrote of his “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7). The book of Acts tells how the apostles and some of the other first century Christians experienced pain and suffering.

Yet, all of this *seems* very inconsistent with the idea that God is an all-loving God. Why would a God of love allow such evil and suffering to abound in the world? Why would Paul say “...we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28)? This passage and others can be troublesome for the people experiencing struggles and pain.

Pain and suffering can be attributed to the beginning of time. This is something that began in the Garden of Eden when Eve and then Adam chose to sin (Genesis 3:14-19). In the previously cited passage, we have an explanation as to why pain exists. One reason it exists is due to the poor decisions that Adam and Eve made in the beginning of time. Those poor decisions had consequences, and the consequences carry over to today. God gave them the ability to choose, and they simply made a bad decision. This is true on the opposite side of the spectrum as well. Just as

the consequences of a bad decision are passed on from one generation to another, so are the blessings which come from good decisions.

Understand genuine biblical joy. When dealing with pain and suffering and all the issue entails, it is only appropriate that we consider joy for a moment. To do this, we need to learn from the apostle Paul. He instructed us to “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4). How could Paul, in all the pain he experienced make such a command. The answer is that rejoicing is a choice. Paul was able to say “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need” (Philippians 4:11-12). He chose to be content and tells us to be content or joyous because it is a choice. Joy is not determined by what happens to us but rather by what we choose. We must choose to learn from pain and choose to have joy amid pain.

Everything has purpose. Earlier, we looked at the verse in Romans 8:28, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” From this verse, we learn our pain and suffering in this life have purpose and meaning. This is perhaps a very difficult concept to understand. Based on things which have happened in our lives, this is something we could question, at least in our own minds. There are some things in life and in religion which are very difficult to understand and analyze. Perhaps we are not to analyze in order to understand, but they are simple biblical principles we are to believe through faith. Pain and suffering are very difficult to understand. Perhaps, this is an issue that must be accepted on faith in God and belief in His word.

The Seed Principle

Carl Hecker

In the beginning it was stated, and the law of reproduction has been confirmed in the experience of all mankind over the centuries. It is an obvious, continuous, and immutable fact of life. Kind produces after its own kind (Genesis 1:24)! The seed of one plant brings forth of its own kind...always! Of course, this is true of physical man and all of the other facets of God’s creation. It is also true in the religious world.

A Baptist preacher, preaching Baptist doctrine, will always produce a Baptist. He will never reproduce a Presbyterian. Everyone surely knows this. The denominational proclaimer can and does depend upon the law that seed of one kind brings forth after its kind. He has seed to sow, and he depends upon it producing as he has sown!

The Restoration Principle: Early in the history of our country, denominational men began to see that division among the churches did not help a struggling frontier people. They needed unity to face the trying times of those formative years. Some in European countries also observed the

fruits of the Reformation movement. They were not pleased with their harvest. Forced by necessity, they began to reexamine their seed.

Consider This Seed. Jesus declared the seed to be the word of God (Luke 8:11). What if one preached only the word of God? Would it produce something else rather than a Christian? No one believes that it would. All agree that the Gospel is the Truth. That the Truth is the Word of God. That the New Testament is the revealed Will of the Father.

With that premise, what would happen if men only preached that Word, nothing else? If a preacher could only preach the Truth, the Word, the Will of the Father, revealed in the New Testament, he could only produce Christians. He could not make a Baptist. Such is not in the New Testament. He could not make a Presbyterian. Such is not in the New Testament. He could not make some kind of a Christian. There is only one kind in the New Testament.

Why is there division? Why so many denominations? How do men become so mixed up in trying to explain the different churches, sometime meeting on the same corner across from each other? How come there are hundreds of different and conflicting doctrines all claiming to be from the same Christ? Is Christ divided? Is our Father the author of confusion? Is this His fault? Did He plan it this way?

There are some more specific questions. Did Christ want us to count beads or burn incense? Or both. Or neither? Did God want a priesthood to take our confessions? Did He want His people divided into clergy and laity? Did He raise up icons to preach faith only while another preached works only? Which one should we believe? Is God indifferent?

Consider the Restoration Principle. Who would want to charge God with the division of His own people? Who would want to charge God with supplying faulty seed? Now, according to the seed principle, division is caused by men sowing different kinds of seed. Remember, seed produce after their own kind!

What would happen if men began to sow only the pure seed of the Gospel (1 Peter 1:22-25)? Read this passage carefully. The seed principle affirms that the souls of men would be purified. If no other seed is mixed in, the souls of men would remain pure!

The restoration principle calls for men to preach this Gospel in all its pristine simple beauty. It calls for men to restrain from trying to reform old traditions and corrupt practices of the past.

The restoration principle calls for men to dedicate themselves to the restoration of preaching the simple terms of the New Testament. It calls men to organize God’s people in the same, simple, New Testament arrangement of local congregations.

The restoration principle calls for men to preach Christ and Him crucified. It requires men to put the authority of Christ first and to recognize no other! It pleads for men to strive for the unity for which He prayed so fervently (John 17:20-21).

This prayer even gives the reason for relying on the seed principle! Is this asking too much? History has shown that many will not give up their own religious past. Galatians 6:7 states, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” □

Observations and Concerns

October 4, 2023

Welcome Visitors! We are delighted to have you as our guests.

Praise in Psalm: “How excellent *is* thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings” (Psalm 36:7).

Declaration of Appreciation: For the hope and support faithful brethren provide by teaching and preaching the truth in love and holding fast to sound doctrine both here and elsewhere.

Our second Sunday morning guest speaker this month is **T-Roy Hass**. He is a student at the Bible Institute of Missouri and the grandson of Ron and Mary Hass.

Our **monthly potluck luncheon** is this Sunday after morning services. All are invited to stay!

There will be a **youth devo** on Friday, October 6th at 6:00 PM at the home of the Swearingens.

Remember in Prayer:

- ▶ **Sammy Gray** will be having medical tests conducted in the coming weeks.
- ▶ **Andy Hudson** was in a car accident and is recovering at home.
- ▶ **Joyce Cash** was home sick this past Lord’s Day.
- ▶ **Sandra Rowell**, Landon Rowell’s step mom, was diagnosed with lymphoma.

Lee & Walnut Gospel Meeting: October 8-11, Tommy Stacks, Theme: “**Heaven — The Home of the Righteous.**”

Azalea Gospel Meeting: October 22-25, Jamie Beller, Theme: “**What Manner of Person We Ought to Be?**”

Schedule of Services	Assignments			
		Wednesday, Oct. 4	Sunday, Oct. 8 AM	Sunday, Oct. 8 PM
	Announcements	Chris Nelson	Chuck Northrop	Chris Nelson
	Song Leader	Bill Dilks	Bill Dilks	Ross Swearingen
	Prayer	Chuck Northrop	Ross Swearingen	Bill Dilks
	Lord's Supper (speaker)		Chuck Northrop	Doyle Jackson
	Lord's Supper		Doyle Jackson	
	Lesson	Doyle Jackson	T-Roy Hass	Chuck Northrop
	Prayer / Door Attendant	Ross Swearingen	Chris Nelson	Chris Nelson
Sundays				
Bible Classes.	9:30 AM			
Worship	10:30 AM			
Worship	5:00 PM			
Wednesdays				
Bible Classes.	7:00 PM			
Website: oologahcofc.org				