

## Why Do Men Suffer?

John 9:1-12

Charlie Brackett

Why do people suffer? Often even innocent people? This question has been asked countless times in the annals of history. While teaching the Bible in Eastern Europe I found it was the most frequently asked question by those with whom I studied.

The Bible does not try to gloss over the sufferings of men, nor does it anywhere offer a simple, comprehensive reason for human suffering. This story in the first twelve verses of John 9 tells of Christ's encounter with the man born blind and provides us an answer, but only in this case. In verse three Jesus said, *"Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him."* Why was the man born blind? God willed it. He wanted this man to suffer as he did so that through him the reality and power of Divinity might be made known. In his healing, God would reveal Himself.

But there are other reasons we suffer. Sometimes as a consequence of our sins. Sometimes because of the sins of others. Also, if we disregard the laws of nature, we may suffer, or die. Even despite every precaution, we may still suffer at nature's hand. Earthquakes, volcanoes and tidal waves will engulf anyone who lingers. Natural disasters do not discriminate between the deserving and undeserving. They often show no regard for those who have shown them the greatest care and respect. Harm may come our way as aimlessly and capriciously as a roll of the dice. Who has not been adversely affected in some way by the law of averages? There are many causes to human suffering. Read the book of Job for a divine commentary on this subject, which has perplexed so many.

The fact of human suffering serves us in at least two ways. First, it is a warning that we can find safety and comfort only in God. The world offers no trustworthy refuge. Suffering should remind us of our frailty and the brevity of life. It is one way our God warns us to repent. It should cause us to turn from selfish, worldly pursuits to dependence upon Him. Secondly, it tests and perfects our faith. Read James 1:2-4, 12 and Romans 5:3, 4. Every faithful Christian will suffer. He or she must. 1 Peter 4:12-19 says not to be surprised at or ashamed of suffering for faith. It is a necessary part of serving God. In describing the citizens of God's kingdom, Jesus said, *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

How about it? Can't we endure a little pain and suffering for God's glory? Jesus did. The apostle Paul was convinced that the worst of human plights was not really so bad after all. Listen to 2 Corinthians 4:16,17: *"Therefore, we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison..."* Surely, heaven will be more than worth it all.