



## Tragedy and Suffering

Part 3 in a series of 3 articles.

We live in a world where tragedy and suffering are a present reality. The questions and hurt associated with such circumstances can be difficult to understand. Thankfully, God's faithfulness and the truths of the Bible can help us grasp suffering from a biblical viewpoint. Last month we discussed the love of God for His people and His sovereignty over this world. This month we conclude our discussion, focusing on the final hope in a believer's life and God's goodness.

### Paradise Awaits The Believer – “Will the pain ever stop?”

*Hebrews 12:1-3* “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”

These verses from Hebrews can be encouraging to the suffering soul. When tragedy hits, we feel excruciating pain and often wrestle with difficult questions. The resulting weight can feel like too much to bear. We are encouraged in Hebrews to “run with patience” the path that is before us. Healing after tragedy means restarting daily tasks and reengaging in life. It also means shifting our focus from our circumstances to our hope, Jesus. We are not to avoid or discount the pain but to purposefully shift our focus from what has happened toward where we are headed. Jesus gave us an example of how to walk through tragedy.

He hurt -> He questioned -> He overcame -> He is in Paradise

One of the most comforting truths in Scripture is the destination that awaits the believer. Scripture paints Heaven as an unimaginably wonderful place where God's people are in perfect communion with Him and each other. Knowing the end of the story can give us strength and motivation to endure in the midst of great difficulty. One way to think about this truth is to consider how your current situation will look in 30, 50, or 100 years when you will have been ushered into eternity. For the believer, this means we will be in a place so wonderful that words cannot fully describe it. This reality leads the Apostle Paul to write the following in *Romans*:

*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.”

We cannot imagine a place so wonderful that it would so greatly diminish our current pain, but the Word of God tells us we have such a place to look forward to! Knowing Heaven is our destination does not take away the pain of tragedy, but it does give an anchor of hope we can hold onto. We hurt and are invited to express our pain to the Lord who welcomes us into His presence (Hebrews 4:15-16). We trust that according to God's grace and mercy, we will one day experience the fulfillment of *Revelation 21:4*.

*Revelation 21:4 "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."*

Tragedy is not the end of the story for the believer. While we hurt today and see so much suffering around us, we anticipate the reality of eternity in a place where tragedy, suffering, and pain do not exist. Can you imagine the wonder and excitement of being in a place where we no longer have to wrestle with Satan, the flesh, or a fallen world? All that will remain is peace, harmony, and joy. The only questions we will have are ones that lead us on a journey of exploration of Heaven and the excitement of seeing "face to face" and "knowing and being known" (1 Corinthians 13:12). We will be in God's presence and rightly know His goodness all of the time, which is the essence of Paradise.

## **Yes! God is Good**

The goodness of God is often what comes into question when tragedy and suffering occur. We wrestle with questions like "How could a good God. . ." or, "If God is loving why would He. . ." Perhaps the wise answer to these questions is to weep over the pain and circumstances that stirs such questions. After doing so, it would be wise to contemplate if a more helpful question would be to simply ask, "Is God good?" After all, that is the question at the core of the other questions.

Scripture answers the question of "Is God good?" with a resounding, "Yes! God is good. Even when circumstances are not." Scripture gives us truths about God, but we are not always told how two truths fit together. For example, we are told God is good, but we sometimes have difficulty seeing the goodness of the Lord in our specific situation. Instead, we are asked to trust what we are told about God in the midst of circumstances that seem contrary to the truth we read in Scripture.

*Psalms 100:5 "For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."*

*1 Chronicles 16:34 "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever."*

*Nahum 1:7 "The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him."*

We started in Lamentations, and it seems fitting to end there as well. We serve a good and merciful God. Even so, we dwell in a fallen world where we see and experience suffering. When Satan tries to convince us that these realities bring into question God's existence or goodness, let us cling to the promises and truths we have been given in His word.

*Lamentations 3:21-26 "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. <sup>26</sup> It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD."*

Tragedy and suffering affect us all through the events that occur in our lives, causing us to feel grief and loss. For more information about dealing with grief and loss, please visit our website at [www.accounseling.org/emotions](http://www.accounseling.org/emotions) or call ACCFS at 309-263-5536. Next month we will begin a new series on the topic of estate planning and its implications on families and relationships.



ACCFS has recently finished its latest IVP Bible study adaption. This study, *Images of God*, looks at ten biblical examples of imagery descriptions of God in order to help us properly view God in our lives. This study adds to the growing library of adapted studies which also includes the topics of:

<i>Grief</i>	<i>Fruit of the Spirit</i>	<i>Forgiveness</i>	<i>Integrity</i>
<i>Hope</i>	<i>God's Comfort</i>	<i>Faith</i>	<i>Prayer (summer 2014)</i>

These Bible studies are an excellent resource for individuals or couples who are seeking further study and knowledge in any of these areas. Each Bible study booklet is available for \$8.50 either at our facility or from our website ([www.accounseling.org](http://www.accounseling.org)). We encourage you also to sign up for our resource emails and newsletters which you can do on the website.