

## Lesson 5

### Problem of Evil, Part 1

*What do people mean when they say, 'I am not afraid of God because I know He is good?' Have they never even been to a dentist?*

- C. S. Lewis<sup>1</sup>

Imagine yourself in Lisbon, Portugal – the year is 1755, today's holiday is All Saints Day. As a milk deliverer, you ascend to the brothels, which are located in the mountains for your last deliveries and feel the ground begin to shake beneath your feet. To your terror, as you turn and face the city of 100,000 beneath you, and the sea in the distance, you watch a massive tsunami level the entire city. Every building is destroyed, great works of literature and art are lost, and most significantly, roughly 50,000 people have died.<sup>2</sup> Due to the geographic location, the brothels and their customers are untouched while every church and most members are annihilated in the wake. The dates, locations, and specific circumstances change, yet the question remains, how could an all-powerful, all-loving, and all-knowing God allow such terrible suffering for the saints while the sinners continue in their deviant ways unscathed?

The nature of the human mind is to be drawn to suffering on a grand scale, yet the reality is that immense suffering occurs on a daily basis free from any publicity. Consider that nearly 2 million people will die this year from contaminated water alone. By dinner time, 95,000 people will have died today, some 20,000 of those from hunger.<sup>3</sup> So whether one considers events of great magnitude or the daily happenings around the globe, vast suffering is encountered and demands an explanation. For many, the thought that an all-powerful, all-loving, and all-knowing God could allow such suffering is simply incomprehensible.

Despite the universal nature of suffering, humanity finds itself constantly seeking to remove itself from suffering's tidal wave. Tim Keller comments,

“When we hear of a tragedy, there is a deep-seated psychological defense mechanism that goes to work. We think to ourselves that such things happen to other people, to poor people, or to people who do not take precautions. Or we tell ourselves that if only we get the right people into office and get our social systems right, nothing like this will happen again.”<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Armand M. Nicholi Jr., *The Question of God: C. S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud Debate God, Love, Sex, and the Meaning of Life*, (New York: Free Press, 2002), 202.

<sup>2</sup> Van Til, <http://www.visionandvalues.org/2011/03/the-great-lisbon-earthquake-thinking-theology-and-natural-disasters/>, (accessed May 14, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> “Population”, <http://www.worldometers.info/>, last accessed November 27, 2014. Statistics are taken as of approximately 7:00 pm.

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*, (New York: Penguin Group, 2013), 2.

Unfortunately, death and suffering appear to be random and completely unavoidable. Those taking every known precaution are ushered into eternity in a moment by a drunk driver, who walks away from the accident. Young, healthy men leave behind a hurting family when cancer ravages their bodies before age 35. An article in the *New York Times*, reflecting on “The Beltway Sniper” acknowledges this uncomfortable tension,

“We are always looking to make some sort of sense out of murder in order to keep it safely at bay: I do not fit the description; I do not live in that town; I would never have gone to that place, known that person. But what happens when there is no description, no place, nobody? Where do we go to find our peace of mind? ... The fact is, staving off our own death is one of our favorite national pastimes. Whether it’s exercise, checking our cholesterol or having a mammogram, we are always hedging against mortality. Find out what the profile is, and identify the ways in which you do not fit it. But a sniper taking a single clean shot, not into a crowd but through the sight, reminds us horribly of death itself. Despite our best intentions, it is still, for the most part, random. And it is absolutely coming.”<sup>5</sup>

When pressed on this seeming randomness and apparent incompatibility with Christianity, many Christians are sheepishly cornered into a weak response. Perhaps 2-3 verses that seem to minimize the depth and breadth of suffering are referenced, but the answer is far from compelling. This is unfortunate, for one of the great themes through Scripture is suffering! Since Scripture spends considerable time from cover to cover, across several eras, cultures, and genres of literature, the student of Scripture should be prepared to answer the suffering objection “with gentleness and respect”<sup>6</sup> from virtually any point in Scripture.

Genesis 3 recounts the origin of suffering on earth. Later in the book, through the life of Joseph, God’s salvific purposes are accomplished through immense cruelty and undeserved suffering. In Exodus, the Israelite people are sent through 40 years of difficult trials as they wandered through desert wilderness, burying an entire generation along the way. In the Psalms, cries from the depth of the human heart are recorded from a broad variety of differing circumstances. Among them are intense, heart-wrenching groans through suffering as recorded in Psalm 44, “Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever! Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?”<sup>7</sup> Other books of the wisdom literature, namely Job and Ecclesiastes, spend significant time dealing with seemingly undeserved pain and suffering along with the apparent randomness of such circumstances. Among the prophets, Habakkuk’s entire book is dedicated to asking God why the world is filled with so much pointless suffering. Jeremiah echoes a similar cry from the depths of despair. In the New Testament, I Peter and the book of Hebrews concentrate on equipping people to carry on life in the midst of difficulty and untold sorrow. Shining as the central figure in the entire Bible, Jesus’ life and death tells the story of the greatest

---

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Keller, 2-3.

<sup>6</sup> I Peter 3:15, ESV.

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 44:23-24, ESV.

suffering experienced in all of history – and not one bit of it was deserved! Any response to the problem of evil and suffering that does not recognize this issue as a central theme of Scripture is incomplete.

### **What Suffering *Doesn't* Mean**

Christianity offers a unique answer to the problem of suffering and evil that cannot be matched by any competing worldviews. In response to the magnitude of suffering, God himself chose to come and dwell in the suffering, and ultimately, the show the immensity of His love by suffering more than anyone had or ever can. Consider the words of Edward Shillito,

“The other gods were strong, but Thou was weak. They rode, but Thou didst stumble to a throne. But to our wounds only God’s wounds can speak, and not a god has wounds but Thou alone.”<sup>8</sup>

Of course, this reality does not give a full explanation for why God has allowed the suffering to take place. However, from the central character of the Bible, we learn that God’s allowance of suffering is *not* because He does not love us. Rather, we find God to be Immanuel, God with us, in our most intense and personal suffering. So, before taking a close examination of why God allows so much suffering or how we should walk through fiery trials, we know that God’s love is ever present and actually drove Him to suffer so that He could relate to us in our deepest and most painful cries.

### **Outlining Our Approach**

Philosophers often split evil into 2 general categories – moral and natural. Moral evil is simply that which results from the direct actions of moral agents. For example, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 would be considered an example of moral evil. Natural evil arises from events in the world that are considered “natural” – tornadoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, disease, birth defects, and the like. Natural evil results from the operation of our universe, not from the specific actions of moral agents.

Not only is the Bible filled with suffering, it is also filled with people asking God why there is so much suffering. Many of our questions receive direct answers in Scripture. However, some of our questions do not receive a direct answer from Scripture. In these cases, we must look at ideas taught throughout Scripture and apply them to the questions at hand. We will start by looking at the direct questions and answers in Scripture, and then move to the inferences we can make about suffering from ideas taught in Scripture.

---

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Keller, 113.

## Moral Evil Directly Cited in Scripture

### *The Story of Joseph*

The life of Joseph, as detailed in Genesis 37-50 gives detailed insight into the problem of moral evil. Joseph's brothers hated him, so they made a plan to kill him and lie about the cause of his death to their father. Instead of killing Joseph, his brothers decided to sell him as a slave to some travelling businessmen. These slave traders turned around and sold Joseph to an Egyptian man named Potiphar. As a slave in Potiphar's house, Joseph found success in whatever he did and was quickly promoted to the supervisor of the entire house. However, there was one dark spot to his stay with Potiphar: Potiphar's wife found Joseph very attractive and regularly attempted to seduce him. Following one attempt, when they were alone in the house, Joseph ran to avoid the temptation. In an attempt to get revenge, Potiphar's wife accused Joseph of attempted adultery and ultimately had him thrown in jail. In the prison, Joseph found favor with the chief jailer and was entrusted with the care of the entire jail. He remained in prison for at least 2 years before being summoned to Pharaoh's court where it finally became clear how God would use all the moral evil in Joseph's life for a greater good.<sup>9</sup>

Joseph was forcibly removed from his homeland, sold into slavery, unjustly accused of attempted adultery or possibly even rape, and sentenced to several years in prison. None of this moral evil, however, indicated "even a temporary loss of divine superintendence of Joseph's life and God's purpose for His people, Israel."<sup>10</sup> Throughout Joseph's unjust suffering we are told that God was "with him"<sup>11</sup>, "made all he did prosper"<sup>12</sup>, "found/gave him favor"<sup>13</sup>, "blessed/blessing"<sup>14</sup>, and "showed him mercy"<sup>15</sup>. As an Egyptian magistrate, Joseph was given an official transport<sup>16</sup>, an Egyptian name<sup>17</sup>, an Egyptian wife<sup>18</sup>, and the Egyptian population was commanded to show honor to Joseph wherever he went.<sup>19</sup> Clearly, God was at work in the life of Joseph to use gross moral evil for His glory. God brought Joseph to power in Egypt and gave him wisdom to enact a plan that would allow the nation to survive a disastrous famine. When Joseph's family came to Egypt looking for food during the famine (with no knowledge that Joseph even lived in Egypt), they were overcome with fear when they realized Joseph's powerful position and authority to punish them. The theological capstone to this marvelous story comes in

---

<sup>9</sup> Joseph was probably 17 when he was sold into slavery (37:2). We also know that he spent 2 years in prison after interpreting the dreams of the butler and the cupbearer (41:1). We do not know how long Joseph was in prison prior to interpreting these dreams. We do know that Joseph was 30 when he stood before Pharaoh to interpret his dream (41:46). Therefore, 13 years elapsed between Joseph's sale into slavery and his appearance before Pharaoh. At a minimum, he spent 2 years in jail, and at a maximum, he spent 11 years in Potiphar's household.

<sup>10</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary: Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 66.

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 39:3, 21

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Genesis 39:4, 21.

<sup>14</sup> Genesis 39:5.

<sup>15</sup> Genesis 39:21.

<sup>16</sup> Genesis 41:43

<sup>17</sup> Genesis 41:45

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Genesis 41:43.

Genesis 50:20 when Joseph says, “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.” In other words, even when people are doing horribly wicked things, God is still using their wickedness to bring a greater good that they could never have imagined!

### *The Book of Habakkuk*

While the story of Joseph is one of the more well-known narratives in the Bible, the prophet Habakkuk far more obscure. J. Vernon McGee gives a quick summary of this short book, “Habakkuk is a big WHY? Why God permits evil is a question that every thoughtful mind has faced. The book is the answer to the question: Will God straighten out the injustice of the world? This book answers the question: Is God doing anything about the wrongs of the world? This book says that He is.”<sup>20</sup> Much like Joseph, Habakkuk found himself surrounded by wickedness. While we do not have a record of Joseph asking God for an explanation, virtually the entire book of Habakkuk is dedicated to recording Habakkuk’s questions and God’s responses on this important question.

When faced with the pervasive wickedness and violence in the land, Habakkuk cried out for God’s judgment on Judah. The moral evil was great, and Habakkuk was shocked that God would allow it to go unchecked. God’s response is fascinating, “*Look among the nations and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.*”<sup>21</sup> Most of us wouldn’t be very happy if this was the response we got! Yet, in light of the story of Joseph (and countless other stories), it is clear that humans tend to undersell what God is doing in the world. God follows this response by explaining that He would use the mighty Babylonians to bring judgment on Israel.

To Habakkuk’s credit, he takes God at His word, but he then brings a second complaint before God. How could God use the evil Babylonian army to bring justice? This army was known for its ruthless ways, and yet, they would be used to judge the people of God? How could God’s hand actually make the wicked nation prosper? Habakkuk says, “*why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?*”<sup>22</sup> God’s response is that judgment on the Babylonians is coming, and Habakkuk should trust God to deliver on His promise, “*If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.*”<sup>23</sup> The next verse is the most important verse in the book, and explains how Habakkuk is to proceed, “*the righteous shall live by his faith.*”<sup>24</sup> In other words, there are some parts of life that will be difficult to understand, but God has revealed Himself to us so that we can trust Him in the times when life doesn’t seem to make sense.

You might ask why Habakkuk should trust God to punish the wickedness in the earth if it doesn’t look like he is doing anything. Habakkuk’s conclusion is that because God has acted

---

<sup>20</sup> J. Vernon McGee, “Notes and Outlines: Nahum and Habakkuk”, 7. <http://thruthebibble.ca/notes/Nahum-Habakkuk.pdf>, last accessed, November 28, 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Habakkuk 1:5, ESV.

<sup>22</sup> Habakkuk 1:13, ESV.

<sup>23</sup> Habakkuk 2:3, ESV.

<sup>24</sup> Habakkuk 2:4, ESV.

faithfully for generations gone by, Joseph being one example, it is reasonable to have faith that God will continue to be faithful. *“I have heard all about you, Lord. I am filled with awe by your amazing works. In this time of our deep need, help us again as you did in years gone by.”* Matthew Henry comments on Habakkuk’s transformation from questioning God to trusting God, *“He had looked back upon the experiences of [God’s people] in former ages, and had observed what great things God had done for them, and so he recovered himself out of his fright, and not only retrieved his temper, but fell into a transport of holy joy.”* The faithfulness of God allows Christians to trust Him!

### *The Life of Jesus*

It might seem obvious to point out that the immense suffering in the life of Jesus was caused by moral evil, but the point must be observed. He came to earth and lived a sinless life to suffer an unprecedented amount at the hands of evil men.

Let’s take a minute to look at just a few aspects of His suffering. During His trial, he was beaten with a Roman flagrum. This device was “a short whip with balls of lead tied near the ends of each thong.”<sup>25</sup> This device was intended to rip through the flesh, through the muscles, and deep into the internal organs deep within one’s body. It was phenomenally painful! Then, a “crown” of long thorns was driven into his skull, where there are more veins than almost anywhere else in the body. This was not only incredibly painful, but caused significant blood loss. Then, He was forced to carry His own cross (and ended up being physically unable to carry it), which probably weighed around 100 pounds. The Romans then used 5-7 inch spikes to nail Jesus to the wooden cross. These were placed through his wrists and feet, some of the areas of the body with the most nerve endings. Not only did these send painful shocks through His entire body, they also expanded His prior wounds. Once on the cross, He dies by asphyxiation, literally too weak to breathe. Our modern word, “excruciating” means “out of the cross” and was literally invented because no other word was strong enough to describe the suffering involved with crucifixion!<sup>26</sup>

This evil and suffering did not take God by surprise; rather, it was His plan! Acts 2:23 says that Jesus was *“delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.”*<sup>27</sup> But, His gruesome death was used to *“reconcile to Himself all things”*<sup>28</sup> At the very least then, we can see that the most immense suffering possible is being used by God to bring something greater that could not be realized without the suffering.

We have taken a quick survey of moral evil in the story of Joseph, the book of Habakkuk, and the life of Jesus. It should also be noted that Hebrews 11 details extraordinary evil actions taken against the people of God, *“Some were tortured ... others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword.”*<sup>29</sup> And how does the author of Hebrews exhort his readers to press on through trials?

---

<sup>25</sup> “The Physical Suffering of Jesus”, [http://www.thenazareneway.com/holy\\_week/physical\\_suffering\\_jesus.htm](http://www.thenazareneway.com/holy_week/physical_suffering_jesus.htm), Last accessed March 30, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/excruciating>, last accessed March 30, 2015.

<sup>27</sup> ESV.

<sup>28</sup> Colossians 1:20, ESV.

<sup>29</sup> Hebrews 11:35-37, ESV.

Hebrews says to look back at the example of past sufferers and to look back at the example of Jesus.

*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame ... Consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.”<sup>30</sup>*

Countless other examples could be cited, but from these three we can make a few basic observations:

1. Historically, we can see how God has used the evil intentions of humans to bring about a greater good than previously imagined.
2. God’s response to suffering individuals is often to trust that He is at work, even when His work is not clearly seen.
3. We are able to trust God that He is using our suffering for a greater good because of His track record of faithfulness to saints throughout history.
4. We are able to trust God that He is using our suffering for a greater good because of His track record of faithfulness as displayed through the Incarnation and Crucifixion.

### **Natural Evil Directly Cited in Scripture**

#### *The Suffering of Job*

The book of Job details not only a great deal of suffering as a result of moral evil, but also great suffering flowing from natural evil as well. Consider the natural evil recorded by one of Job’s servants, *“The fire from God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”<sup>31</sup>* Whether this refers to a lightning bolt, a meteor, or some other natural disaster, it’s clearly an event that would be classified as “natural evil.” A few verses later, another servant brings a bad report, *“Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead.”<sup>32</sup>* As if those were not enough, another Job’s received some type of disease that caused *“loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.”<sup>33</sup>* It is interesting that God chose to reveal Job’s upright standing at this time, *“In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”<sup>34</sup>* His humble response is particularly impressive when you consider the pressure from his wife and friends to abandon God.

---

<sup>30</sup> Hebrews 12:1-3, ESV.

<sup>31</sup> Job 1:16, ESV.

<sup>32</sup> Job 1:18-19, ESV.

<sup>33</sup> Job 2:7, ESV.

<sup>34</sup> Job 2:11, ESV.

The book of Job spends over 30 chapters chronicling the dialogue between Job, his friends, and his wife as they attempt to understand why Job was struck with such great suffering. At the conclusion of the book, God responds to their complaints through a series of questions designed to show Job his limited perspective on the universe. The opening lines of God's response make his point abundantly clear,

*“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding! Who determined its measurements? Surely you know!”<sup>35</sup>*

This type of questioning is continued for 126 verses across 4 chapters!! God is sending one question after another, rapid fire style towards Job. Each question is simply impossible to answer without Divine knowledge. At the conclusion of the questioning, Job responds, *“I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”<sup>36</sup>* In other words, once Job got a right view of God, his right to question God about the suffering he endured vanished. Some might wonder why Job was able to see God with his eyes, but we are not afforded the same benefit. Scholars generally agree that Job was one of, if not the first books of the Bible written. Since we now have access to the entire Bible, and Job had none, we actually have more revelation from God than Job did!

### *The Collapse of the Tower at Siloam*

In Luke 13, some people asked Jesus about the reasons for suffering through moral evil. Jesus responded that death at the hands of wicked men did not mean that the victims were necessarily worse sinners than those who survived. According to John MacArthur, “That answer had to have caught them off guard, since it emphatically rejected their conventional theological wisdom.”<sup>37</sup> Apparently the questioners also thought that natural evil was always caused by the sinfulness of the sufferers as well. Jesus quickly transitioned the conversation to a tower in a town called Siloam that apparently fell and killed 18 people, *“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>38</sup>* This type of suffering can be extremely difficult to understand because it appears to be completely random. Jesus' commentary on the tragedy not only debunked the prevailing view of his questioners, but also demonstrated one purpose of tragedy – to remind us of our mortality and motivate us to deal with our true needs, our spiritual needs. Jesus said, *“unless you repent, you all likewise will perish.”<sup>39</sup>* D. A. Carson provides great insight into this dialogue,

“Jesus treats wars and natural disasters not as agenda items in a discussion of the mysterious ways of God, but as incentives to repentance. It is as if he is saying that God

---

<sup>35</sup> Job 38:2-5, ESV.

<sup>36</sup> Job 42:5-6, ESV.

<sup>37</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series: Luke 11-17* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2013), 186.

<sup>38</sup> Luke 13:4, ESV.

<sup>39</sup> Luke 13:5, ESV.

uses disaster as a megaphone to call attention to our guilt and destination, to the imminence of his righteous judgment if he sees no repentance. This is an argument developed at great length in Amos 4. Disaster is a call to repentance. Jesus might have added (as he does elsewhere) that peace and tranquility, which we do not deserve, show us God's goodness and forbearance.

It is a mark of our lostness that we invert these two. We think we deserve the times of blessing and prosperity, and that the times of war and disaster are not only unfair but come perilously close to calling into question God's goodness or his power—even, perhaps, his very existence. Jesus simply did not see it that way."<sup>40</sup>

C. S. Lewis made a similar point in a lecture given to students at Oxford University near the start of World War II,

“War makes death real to us, and that would have been regarded as one of its blessings by most of the great Christians of the past. They thought it good for us to be always aware of our mortality. I am inclined to think they were right ... In ordinary times only a wise man can realise it. Now the stupidest of us knows. We see unmistakably the sort of universe in which we have all along been living, and must come to terms with it.”<sup>41</sup>

### *A Man Born Blind*

John 9 records a story similar to the one we just examined from Luke 13. The particular story differs in two primary ways. First, the question is relating not to moral evil or a random tower falling, but a man who was born blind. This is important to note because the man's blindness was in no way caused by himself, but was completely beyond his control. Second, this question came directly from his own disciples. They asked, “*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*”<sup>42</sup> In typical form, Jesus flips the script on the disciples and tells them, “*It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in Him.*”<sup>43</sup> In this case, the “works of God” meant physical healing (9:6-7) as well as spiritual healing (9:35-38). Additionally, the “works of God” were used to lead others to Jesus who had merely observed these powerful works (9:8-12).

Some might question the goodness of God in such a situation – did God cause the blindness to occur? While sickness on the whole is an effect of sin entrance into the world through Adam and Eve's Fall, did God directly intervene and cause this man to be born blind? F. F. Bruce responds,

“This does not mean that God deliberately caused the child to be born blind in order that, after many years, his glory should be displayed in the removal of the blindness; to think so would again be an aspersion on the character of God. It does mean that God overruled

---

<sup>40</sup> D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord?: Reflections on Suffering and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker 1990), 66-67.

<sup>41</sup> C. S. Lewis, “Learning in War Time”, <http://www.hebrew-streams.org/works/texts/learning-in-war-time.pdf>, last accessed March 30, 2015.

<sup>42</sup> John 9:2, ESV.

<sup>43</sup> John 9:3, ESV.

the disaster of the child's blindness so that, when the child grew to manhood, he might, by recovering his sight, see the glory of God in the face of Christ, and others, seeing this work of God, might turn to the true Light of the World."<sup>44</sup>

So no, God did not directly cause the man to be born blind. But, in His mercy, God did use the man's blindness to show the works of God by bringing physical and spiritual healing to the man, and to direct observers to Jesus. From the examples of natural evil cited, we can make a few additional observations:

1. A right view of God and of man often changes our perspective so that the problem of evil and suffering doesn't seem so daunting.
2. One reason God allows natural evil is to reveal Himself to us in a more intimate way.
3. Another reason God allows natural evil is to remind humanity of their mortality and their need to deal with their eternal destination.
4. God is using natural evil, and the suffering it produces, to bring Himself glory through both physical and spiritual healing.

When dealing with the mystery of evil and suffering directly from Scripture's inquiries, we are given a great deal of information to help us approach life with hope. Scripture focuses on using suffering to help us have a right view of God and of ourselves. It also spends significant time showing how God used suffering to ultimately produce a greater good. However, we have not yet addressed the question of why moral and natural evil exist in the first place. That question, along with several others relating to this topic will be tackled in next week's lesson.

---

<sup>44</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 209.