

Bible Thoughts

With P.H.A.Hopkins

The problem of Pain

The thoughts and note material given on these pages are only a possible suggestion of the meaning, they must not be taken as inspired, however they are prayerfully prepared and compared with other similar material. There are many ways in which God's Word can be analyzed and none must be taken in place of the Word of God itself.

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The problem of pain.

Before we investigate the problem of pain we must first consider the relationship of Mankind and God.

Many people feel that if there is a Creator, who has the almighty power to create the universe, then why does He allow so much suffering on His creation the Earth? Why are we not very happy creatures?

The forms of life which exist upon the planet, known as Earth, live by only preying upon each other, in some this results in their death. But in the higher forms, such as Man, we do find qualities which we call consciousness and reason, which allows Mankind to deal with pain and suffering as well as produce it in a manner which can cause a great deal more pain.

If this creation is so bad how did Mankind ever come to attribute this activity to a wise, loving and good Creator?

The most interesting point is that from the early time of human existence there has always been a feeling and need to worship a greater Being. In some cases this was because of danger or fear of what is the future and the need of a more powerful protection.

If you are told that a large tiger is about to enter your room we would naturally feel frightened because we know of the physical danger from that animal, however, if you were told that a ghost was about to enter the room, you might be frightened but more likely a feeling of dread of the unknown. Mankind has these two attitudes to the physical and the unknown and out of this has come the idea of religion, a worship of the unknown power or force.

The Divine Omnipotence.

"If the Creator, God, was all powerful He would be able to do what He wished and so make any creation perfect and any creatures created very happy with their situation. But the creatures are not happy so does God lack knowledge, goodness, or power, or all." This is the problem of pain in its basic form.

What is the answer?

Omnipotence means "power to do all, or everything." The Bible teaches that "With God all things are possible." [Matt 9:26](#); [Mark 10:27](#); [Mark](#)

[14:36](#). An unbeliever will say that "I thought your God was suppose to be able to do anything. So why are we so troubled?"

Yes He can "unless" there is some restriction which prevents Him using His power. His Omnipotence means that He can do all that is possible, but if God created Mankind to have a freewill, that means that a person can chose to do anything he / she wanted to do, then God cannot overrule that free will, unless that person responds by saying to God, "You take control of my life." Then God can use His Omnipotence for that person.

The freedom to make a choice must mean that there exists things to choose between, so again the facts demands the presence of something other than Mankind. What ever human freedom means, the Divine freedom cannot mean that there are alternatives and a choice of one of them. Perfect goodness and knowledge can never have the need to consider different choices as the fact is that God, and only Himself, produces all that happens, no external force or power can prevent it happening. His own goodness is the root of all His action and His Omnipotence controls every act.

We therefore now have to consider Divine Goodness. From the beginning, if the creation of the universe offered the possibility of suffering, then "Absolute Goodness" would not have created the universe. If we now consider the two states possible we have to ask "would it have been better for me not to have existed?" If I did not exist how would that have been a profit for me? A suffering world does not therefore contradict the Goodness of God.

The Goodness of God.

If God knows all things then we must accept the fact that His judgement will be very different to our judgement as we cannot know all things, what may seem good to each one of us may be totally evil in the eyes of an omnipotent, pure and holy God. In other words the judgement of God can be so different to ours so that our "black" is His "white". Therefore can we state that "God is good" if we do not really understand what is "good."

We can sort this situation out by actually examining what can happen in the lives of people, our personal friends. In a group of people it is possible for some to have a different understanding to what is "good" and "evil." As a result, their influence on the other members of the group can have a considerable effect. But is it for the ultimate good or bad of the group?

It is without doubt that the "goodness" of God could therefore be a very different "goodness" to ours, but if you became influenced by this goodness of God then it must affect your personal attitude to it. As God knows all

things and what is good and bad and what is best for His creation, then any changes to your own situation must be for the "better."

We must note that in practice the standard set by God cannot be that different to that of Mankind because we can find references in the Word of God.

[Rom 1:20-25.](#)

"19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

23 And changed the glory of the un corruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things.

24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. "

For example Jesus Christ called men to repent and return to the standard of God, [Luke 12:54-57.](#)

"54 And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is.

55 And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass.

56 Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?

57 Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right? "

God challenged the Jewish nation in [Jeremiah 2:5-8.](#)

" 5 Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?

6 Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?

7 And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination.

8 The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit."

Now days when we consider the Goodness of God we are actually referring to His love for His creation, His desires to see his Creation in a happy and satisfied situation, but He is not expecting love in return. The relationship between the Creator and the created creature is unique and cannot be compared with any other relationship. He is original, He makes, we are made, He enables our life, keeps us in existence, He gives us power to chose, He loves us.

The relationship of God to Man is shown in the vision of Jeremiah concerning the potter and the clay, [Jeremiah 18:1-10](#). God is perfecting and moulding His creation and He will not be satisfied until it reaches His planned original standard. See [1 Peter 1-25](#).

[Galatians 3:25-27](#).

"25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a school-master.

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. "

We are told to put on Christ, to become like God, to become part of His personal family, God is offering what He has, to share His goodness in all things.

The Love of God.

When the Bible records that God is love, this means that we are the object of His love. It is a love which made Him create the world and make sure the conditions are right for the creation He made. It passes understanding or reason as to why Mankind has such a value in the Creators eyes.

Unfortunately, we are inclined to reject this love, for example, see [Hosea 11:8-10](#).

God does not exist for the sake of man, we were not primarily made to love God, though it is a secondary reason, but we were created so that God could love us, objects created for the Divine love to rest upon. Should we therefore expect God to accept the relationship conditions as now, rejection? If He did then it would clash with His purity and holiness. [1 John 4:10](#).

"10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. "

The status of Mankind.

God gave men and women the ability to chose how they can live their personal life, for good or bad so we have always had the possibility of a person being evil and bad and a person being good. Unfortunately, modern attitudes to good and bad have become somewhat blurred. We seem to have lost the sense of wrong or sin, what was considered wrong a few years ago is now accepted as the normal. A sense of wrong must be part of getting right with God, Jesus Christ took it for granted that men are bad. Until we have a feeling of our sinful nature His words and action have very little affect upon us, we have lost the consciousness of sin. There is an attitude of the people that the worse we have done to God is to ignore Him, why can't He do the same and ignore us?

We also seem to have an impression that the passing of time can cancel any sin, things done when young are of no concern to the present person. Time cannot have any effect on the fact of sin or the guilt of sin. All times are eternal to the eternal God, the only way is for it to be washed away by the blood of Jesus.

Another thing we must avoid is to think that everyone else is in the same state, so badness can be excused. Once you have repented of your sins and been washed through the blood of Jesus you quickly realize there is no excuse for sin. It is not until you come in contact with the truth that God is a loving God and wants the best for Mankind. We must remember that He is also Holy and cannot tolerate the sin of disobedience and His Law, which must eventually be punished.

[James 1:13-15](#).

"13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. "

Why are we in this state?

God is good; He made all things good and perfect, and one of these acts of goodness was to give His creation the gift of free will, His creation can chose how to live and as a result Mankind chose to turn away from God. This must raise the question, "If God knows all things, then why did He create Man knowing he would turn away from Him? God could have removed the first sins of Adam and Eve when they disobeyed the command of God, "Do not touch that tree!", but then what about their next sins and failures? We cannot answer that question as we do not have the all knowing and perfect mind of God, all we see is that He loves His creation and still went ahead with His plans.

It appears that when God created Man in His image, Man was completely good and happy with the power and joy of God and with a perfect world and nature. How long this situation existed we are not told, but the gift of freewill given by God eventually resulted in a total disobedient act against God. It was pride which made Man to chose his own desires rather than the total obedience of God. As a result Man has become separated from God, he may have still physically lived for a while but he became spiritually dead to God and the relationship ended and Man was cut off from the power of God.

God did not give up, instead He remained in control through nature, "Dust thou art, and unto dust you will return." Death entered into the world and pain and suffering became part of the good and happy creation. From now on Man was controlled by his own, pride and ambition, to become top in his own eyes, a "new man" not created by God.

Of course God could have ended it there and then, but He had set Himself a desire for His creation to freely and willingly worship and obey Him. So the All Knowing God took the next step.

[1 Corinthians 15:20-22.](#)

"20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Why do I suffer pain?

When people became evil and wicked there is always the possibility for a person to use pain on others to gain their desires. It is "Man" who has invented swords, guns and bombs and as a result of these weapons many have suffered pain and poverty. However there is much other suffering which is not man-made, disease and illness for example, Satan is often involved in pain, see [Job 1:6-19](#);

[Luke 13:10—17](#);

[1 Cor 5:1—5](#);

[1 Tim 1:20](#).

It has become a common belief that people think that pain and suffering are as a "vengeance" by God for our sinful life. That belief may be a common reaction by one person upon another, as punishment for some incident, but to accuse a Loving Creator of the same behaviour. As God knows that the best for us is to return to Him and commit everything into His hands, so why would He use pain as a punishment, God knows what is best for each person.

That thought can now lead us to ask about other situations, when Abraham was told to sacrifice Isaac by God, the God who is all knowing would know that Abraham would obey, so why put Abraham through the situation and pain? The answer to the question is "Yes, but what did Abraham learn from the situation, did he have a closer relation with God after the event? Did Abraham have a more loving, trusting closeness with God? .

This now reminds us that as a result of the fall of Man, the All Knowing God must have known that Adam and Eve would disobey His command not to touch a specific tree, they were given a free will to do so, yet God arranged for His own Son to take the pain and punishment on the cross to restore the relationship with His creation. The unsearchable omnipotence of God.

Hebrews 9:22.

"22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."

[Mark 10:27](#).

"26 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?"

27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible. "

Heb 2:9.

"9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

Heb 2:14-17.

"14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.

16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. "

Animal Pain.

As far as we know only Man was given the power of free will and as far as we know animals are not able to commit sin or disobey God, yet as a result of the Fall of Mankind, the world has suffered.

God has given us information on why we suffer, but nothing as to why beasts of any sort have also suffered. The story of the creation indicates that God created the animals before He created Adam and Eve. As God is all knowing and good then He has a reason, but He has not revealed anything to us.

Rom 8:22,23.

"22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

God can make Good out of Evil and Suffering.

Because God is omnipotent and all knowing He has the ability to create good out of the evil of Men. For example the jealousy and evil hearts and desires of the religious leaders during the time Jesus was alive on the earth. They had the free will to accept or reject the teaching and warnings given by Jesus, chose to reject and make arrangements to kill Jesus, helped by the action of Judas Iscariot. Yet please note that it was all part of the plan of reconciliation of Mankind and God for Jesus to suffer terrible pain and die on the cross in place of His creation Man. Those involved did not realize that they were working for God.

God has also used evil to punish His chosen people, for example the Israelites had often turned away from Him and had to be punished. Eventually they needed a severe punishment and were taken from the Promised Land into seventy years of exile in Babylon. The Babylonian Nation was very evil, but God chose to use them to punish His people.

[Habakkuk 1:1-9.](#)

The Word of God tells us that God controls the actions and behaviour of all those in position of power. The Babylonian nation was eventually punished by God using the rise of another nation.

[Romans 13:1,2](#)

"1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. "

No pain in Heaven.

[Rom 8:18-21.](#)

" 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.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,

21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. "

We are only given a small glimpse of what is heaven going to be like, but one day those who have put their trust in Jesus will find out.

[John 14:1-3.](#)

"1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. "

[Rev. 21:1-4.](#)

"1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

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."

[Hebrews 4:9,10.](#)

"9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his."

[1 Peter 1:3-5.](#)

"3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

The Future Pain of Hell

Because the creature was given a free will to chose, then there will be some who will ignore the gift of God and chose to reject His love. So without doubt some will not be redeemed. If the happiness of the person depends upon self-surrender, then no one can make that act of surrender but by themselves, and so some will refuse. As a result those who chose not to accept the offer must be prepared to suffer the consequences of rejecting God.

The main teaching of Christianity is that God loves His creation, a love which was so great that He sent His Son to take Mankind's, our place in the punishment, by dieing on the cross in our place. Yes, that is all true, and yet there is a problem which many ignore, in His mercy all God wants is for each person to ask for forgiveness, so easy, an eternal life of happiness. So, here is the real problem,there is offered so much mercy, yet still there is a place called Hell, a place of punishment. How can such a loving God create such a place?

As discussed before, we each were born with a free will, to chose whether to seek God or reject Him. The original plan for Mankind by God was eternal life in obedience to Him, so if a person chooses to reject a relationship with God, what is his future? How can it be an eternal life of rejection and going their own way, however "good" or "evil" that life is? God is pure and holy, how can He accept rejection by His creation? Some people say that death is not final, we should be given a second, or third chance. How many chances should you have to reject God? The Bible teaches that we have only one chance.

[Hebrew 9:7](#)

"27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: "

[Rev 20:11-15.](#)

"11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and

hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

If you chose to reject God, then He will reject you, banished from Him and humanity into hell for eternal punishment.

[Matt 10:8](#)

"8 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

[Matt 25:41](#)

"41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:"

When God created Man He wanted him to willingly love and obey Him, as per His original plan, we all will live for ever, where will you be, heaven or hell?

So the question now arises, "why would a person give up control of their life to suffer eternal pain ?"