

What, then, should our attitude be? What is an appropriate attitude toward responsibility for human suffering? Such an attitude is outlined in the following eight statements.

1. God is the ultimate Creator and Sustainer of existence and life, including that of human beings. As the giver and sustainer of life, He not only has the power, but also the absolute right to take away life. All creatures are His, and He has the right to give or to take life as He pleases.

Does this imply that He has the right to take my life whenever, wherever, and however He pleases? Yes! Does He have the right to take my wife's life? Yes! Does He have the right to take my child's life whenever He pleases? Yes!

In Ezekiel 18:4 the Lord says, "Behold, all souls (or lives) are Mine;" And in Job 1:21 Job acknowledges, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

2. Man is the ultimate creator and sustainer of sin in the human race. As such, man is responsible for the terrible effects of sin, as those effects are seen in man's totally ruined and depraved nature, his physical decay leading to death, and the outworkings of the curse that sin has brought upon the created world.
3. Thus man, not God, is responsible for the disease and death, the natural disasters and calamities, and the suffering to which man is subject. We may speak of God as permitting such calamities, and as inflicting the suffering associated with them, but we should never think or speak of God as causing them in such a way as to imply that God is responsible for them. Man, not God, is responsible for the terrible results of sin!

Daniel expresses this thought eloquently in Daniel 9. He says, "Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame – . . . All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses . . . have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you. You have fulfilled the words spoken against us . . . by bringing upon us great disaster."

4. God has both the sovereign right as Creator and the judicial right as righteous Judge to take away life. Even apart from sin, God, the Creator and Sustainer of life, has the sovereign right to take away life. And in view of mankind's sin, God has the judicial right to permit the terrible results of sin, together with their associated suffering, to take effect at any time, for reasons sufficient to Himself. It is of the Lord's mercies that all of us are not immediately consumed for our sin! (see Lamentations 3:22)
5. Thus for one who suddenly discovers that he or she has a terminal illness and must shortly face death, to blame God, cry out "Why?" or become