

God's suffering people of some of the suffering resulting from sin through prayer and through the Word.

Sooner or later all believers experience one form or another of the many terrible results of sin: sickness, pain, terminal illness, death, bereavement, loss of job and income, loss of home, loss of human friendship or love, great disappointment, unhappiness, depression, natural calamities, and dangers to physical, emotional, and spiritual safety and well-being.

Sometimes God shows us the way out of these difficulties through the truths of His Word. As we make the principles of God's truth part of the fiber of our character, we become better equipped to handle these occasions of suffering, and learn from them. Sometimes He shows us the way to glorify Him in the midst of these difficulties. Usually these are the times when we develop resources that help us cope with our own problems, as well as with those of others.

Sometimes God alleviates our suffering through prayer, either by taking the problem away or by giving strength and hope and courage to bear it.

Perhaps a few points that Kushner makes in When Bad Things Happen to Good People are relevant to this idea. Kushner believes in a God who is good and a man who is good; but His God is finite, not all-powerful, and not in control of all things. Kushner thus fixes responsibility for suffering, neither in man nor in God, but in the way things happen. Kushner says:

I believe in God. But . . . I recognize His limitations. He is limited in what He can do by laws of nature and by the evolution of human nature and human moral freedom. . . God does not cause our misfortunes. Some are caused by bad luck, some are caused by bad people, and some are simply an inevitable consequence of our being human and being mortal, living in a world of inflexible natural laws. The painful things that happen to us are not punishments for our misbehavior . . .

We can agree with Kushner that God does not cause suffering. But we must insist, in faithfulness to Scripture, that God is all-powerful, and that He inflicts suffering for mankind's sin. Kushner then asks:

But what about God's role? If God does not cause the bad things that happen to good people, and if He cannot prevent them, what good is He at all? . . . How does God make a difference in our lives if He neither kills nor cures? . . . God makes some people want to become doctors and nurses, to spend days and nights of self-sacrificing concern with an intensity for which no money can compensate, in the effort to sustain life and alleviate pain. . . .