

Death and suffering

We all have watched a loved one age. Many of us have had to see a loved one, young or old, suffer and die. At times like this our faith can be shaken. We begin to ask questions. Like; if there's a God, why do people grow old? Why is there suffering? Why do we have pain? If he is all powerful, couldn't he stop it? After witnessing this, one might even ask, is there a God?

We must take these questions one at a time, and in small bits. One of our elders, Dwain White, is famous for saying "you don't eat an elephant in one sitting" however the question of the existence of God is an elephant in and of itself. Anybody that has heard me speak on that particular subject will be relieved to hear that I'm not going to do so in this essay. Instead I'm going to post a message that I preached at our first evangelism team event. That will prevent redundancy. If you have any questions about the existence of God, I refer you to that post. It is titled "dumb luck?" If you doubt the existence of God, stop right here, go and read that before continuing on.

Continuing on under the presumption that you either believe in the existence of God or have read "dumb luck?" We tackle our first question. Why do people grow old? In order to understand that question, we have to understand who we are in relation to God, how we got here, and what went wrong. First let's talk about who we are in relation to God. **Gen 1:26** Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." **Gen 1:27** God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. **Gen 2:7** Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

So we can see that, first we were greeted by the triune God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Logically, we only have authority that has been given to us. He put us over the earth and everything in it. except for ourselves. Please notice that. He gave us everything except self authority. That's not to say he didn't give us free will. What good would it be to have authority over all of creation, if you could not exert your will upon it? Authority does not mean ownership. It is God's! He created it and we should treat creation with its proper respect. In like manner, we are created by God. Therefore we belong to God and he has the full authority to implement either blessing or curse. **Gen 2:8** The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. **Gen 2:9** Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

God is good, God is kind, God is loving, God is generous. He gave mankind a perfect environment. He even gave man the fruit from the tree of life. Adam would never grow old, no pain or suffering as long as he obeyed God's one command. **Gen 2:16** The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; **Gen 2:17** but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

God exercised his authority by giving his one law, and the consequences of breaking his one law. Needless to say both Adam and Eve broke that one law. **Gen 3:6** When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. **Gen 3:7** Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. **Gen 3:8** They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

I'm going to go off topic, Just for a moment. I think this will be worth it.

One of the first effects we can see from this act of disobedience is guilt and shame. Let's step back just for a moment and look at another verse from chapter two.

Gen 2:25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Now let's revisit verse 7 in chapter 3. **Gen 3:7** Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked;

The very first effect we see is an awakening of the conscience. The apostle Paul has something very interesting to say about the human conscience. **Rom 14:5** One person regards one day above another, another regards every day *alike*. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. The conviction Paul is talking about is your conscience. What bothers me might not bother you. But sense it bothers me it is sin for me and sense it doesn't bother you it is not sin for you. I encourage you to read the entirety of Romans 14 on this subject. but this also points to the innocence of children in the eyes of God. a rambunctious two year old really doesn't know right from wrong yet. If you let a two year old boy run around naked he is completely unashamed of his nudity. And we can also see from the Genesis text, that when Adam and Eve became aware, they became accountable to God. but there is good news. **Gen 3:21** The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

God shows his grace by covering their shame. And that is exactly what Jesus does for us. When you are clothed in Christ, you are clothed in his righteousness because you have no righteousness of your own. Both you and I are completely morally bankrupt. We have no hope outside of Christ but fortunately he makes salvation available to all who submit to his authority. The second thing I want to point out is from the Genesis 2:25 passage. Neither Adam nor Eve were perfect. They lived in a perfect environment but they were not perfect. We oftentimes blame the woes of the world on Adam and

Eve, but the truth is, if they were perfect they wouldn't have eaten the forbidden fruit. And even if they didn't eat it, either me or you would have. Because we are not perfect either. None of this caught God off guard. Read my essay "eternal God." God knew everything that would ever happen before he created anything. So let me pose an additional question. Why would God create mankind when he knows the suffering man will have to endure? Let's pretend a child has cancer. The cancer is operable and if the surgery is successful the child's life will be spared. The child didn't know why she had to endure the suffering that follows a major surgery. All she understands is the pain that resulted from it. But because she suffered for just a little while, she gained a long life. Now let's say this fictitious little girl came from a loving home. Do you think she blames mom or dad? Most children don't know much, but they do know that mom and dad loves them and would never intentionally do them any harm. We don't understand everything God does but we do know that he loves us. And we know that if we endure this life with faith, he promises to make us perfect. Not just spiritually but he promises to give us perfect bodies in the resurrection. After Adam and Eve Disobeyed God mankind was cut off from the tree of life. After we are given new bodies in the resurrection, we will regain our access to its fruit. Life is a lot like the pretend surgery our little girl went through. God is removing the ones that will reject him. **Mat 3:12** "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Mat 13:29 "But he *said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. **Mat 13:30** 'Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."

The point is that it all has a purpose even if our limited mortal minds can not comprehend it. I want to encourage you to study these things out and if you have any questions for me you may contact me at deadandalive4him@gmail.com.