

Dietrich Bonhoeffer



"We must learn to regard people less in the light of what they do or omit to do, and more in the light of what they suffer."

What is the difference between pain and suffering?



Pain is a negative response to a physical or social stimulus.

Suffering is a (internal spiritual) response to pain.

It is like **guilt** ("I was wrong.") and **shame** ("I am a bad person").

Christian have questions about suffering.

How should Christians respond?

1. If I am walking with God why do I suffer?

Adjust our **Expectations**.

2. Should I hide or suppress my pain in shame?

Attend to our **Emotions**.

Last week

3. Does suffering suggest that God does not love me?

This week

Affirm our **Election**.

3. Affirm our **Election**.



ΕΚΛΕΚΤΟΣ
EKLEKTOS



The Greek word means "**chosen**" or "**picked out**."

3. Affirm our **Election** - **God's Call**.

"28 And we know that in all things God works for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

- **God causes** - God has control of the outcome but not necessarily of all the details.
- **all things to work together** - Some of the individual parts may be bad but Sunday's coming.
- **for good** - The good is defined by God's purposes not our passions.
- **to those who are called** - Those aligned with God's purposes will benefit from God's work.

3. Affirm our **Election** - **God's Call**.

"28 And we know that in all things God works for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

"Those who love God realize that God's purpose for His people is that they will be conformed to the image of His Son and that He will use all things in this life to work toward that end."

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Examples:

- **Paul's thorn in the flesh** (2 Cor. 12:1-10) - It was from Satan but God used it for good.
- **Our suffering in this life** (2 Cor. 1:1-11) - It enables us to comfort others who suffer.
- **The Cross of Christ** - It was unjust but God used it for good.
- **What is painful for you right NOW** - It is a door to develop or demonstrate the image of Christ.



Philip Yancey

"Any discussion of how pain and suffering fit into God's scheme ultimately leads back to the cross."



Timothy Keller

"Suffering is actually at the heart of the Christian story."

3. Affirm our *Election* - **God's Plan.**

"29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; 30 and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."

- **Conformed to Christ's image** - God's purposes are spiritual more than physical.
- **Foreknew** - not "what will happen" but "to whom it will happen." (chosen)
- **Predestined / called / Justified / glorified** - this is the big picture that makes the present suffering nothing by way of comparison.

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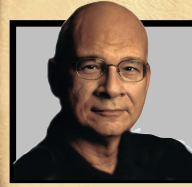
Avoid these mistakes

- **Fatalism** - every detail of life is determined and unalterable, including my faith and behavior.
- **God ordains evil** - Everything that happens is God's will and a part of His plan.
- **Irresponsibility** - I have no (real) free will.
- **False security** - God protects me from myself.

3. Affirm our *Election* - **God's Grace.**

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? ³³ Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us."

- **God is FOR us** - He is not just tolerating us.
- **God is INVESTED in us** - He offers Himself for and to us through Christ.
- **God JUSTIFIES us** - We cannot and will not be condemned.



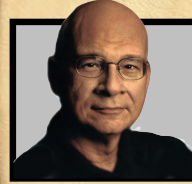
Timothy Keller

"Suffering is unbearable if you aren't certain that God is for you and with you."

3. Affirm our *Election* - **God's Love.**

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

- **Suffering** - is not a sign that God does not love us.
- **Conquerers** - not in this life or in ourselves but in Christ.



Timothy Keller

"You don't really know Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you have."

How are we to deal with suffering?

1. Adjust our **Expectations.**

- **Suffering**
- **Fellowship**

2. Attend to our **Emotions.**

- **Groaning**
- **Longing**

3. Affirm our **Election.**

- **God's Call**
- **God's Plan**
- **God's Grace**
- **God's Love**

God didn't promise
days without pain,
laughter without sorrow,
sun without rain,
**but He did promise
strength for the day,
comfort for the tears,
and light for the way.**