

Doctrine of Pain

1. Pain is a problem for the ethical person as its existence is contemplated. The question arises as to how pain and suffering entered into a moral universe. “*Why is there pain and suffering?*”
2. The *Bible* explains in part how pain and suffering originated in the universe that mortals know.
3. Pain and suffering first appeared to humankind in the Garden of Eden located somewhere in what is known as modern Iraq.
 - *Genesis 2:8 And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. 10 And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. 11 The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; 12 And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. 13 And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. 14 And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates. 15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.*
4. In the Garden of Eden, the garden which God Himself planted, a man and woman were placed only to revolt against reason and divine authority. For their emotional revolt of the soul, for their act of deliberate disobedience in eating of forbidden fruit Adam and Eve were punished.
5. The Author of the form of punishment Adam and Eve received and the Administrator of the same was God. God alone determined the penalty to be paid for transgressing His holy command.
6. By being the Author and Administrator of the punishment for sin God established a principle. The principle is that in His sovereignty over the situation God wanted Adam and Eve, their descendants, the physical universe, Satan and the instrument of Satan in the form of the serpent to experience pain and suffering.
7. Pain and suffering did not and does not have its origin in Satan. Pain and suffering is a divine idea in response to the negative choice made by Satan and then by fallen humanity. Never to be forgotten is that the initial Author and Administrator of pain and suffering is God.
8. In this matter of the origin of pain and suffering, God insists on His divine imprint being recognized. Speaking to Moses, God asked the prophet pointedly the following question.
 - *Exodus 4:11 Who hath made man's mouth? Or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the LORD?*

9. There is only one answer to the rhetorical question. God is the one who makes the dumb, deaf and blind. God is the sovereign of His creation. He has never relinquished ultimate control of His universe to anyone or anything.
10. The absolute sovereignty of God over pain and suffering is manifested in the *Bible* through divine warnings. God warns ahead of time what He will do to those who disobey His authority. By giving these warnings another principle is established: Grace always precedes judgment. God warned Adam and Eve that if they ate of the forbidden fruit they would die. God warned Noah and his generation that He would give them a hundred and twenty years to repent and then He would destroy them. God warned Israel of the consequences of disobedience. God warns sinners of hell and lists those who shall make up the population of the damned. These warnings establish the principle that grace always precedes judgment.
11. To contend that God is not the Author of pain and suffering is to deny His sovereignty. It is also to deny the plain teaching of the *Scriptures*.
12. To argue that God is not the Administrator of pain and suffering is to deny His sovereignty, abandon the teaching of *Scripture* and to leave the word of objective reality.
13. It is at this point that the Great Contest begins. God has a controversy not only with Sin and Satan but also with every soul that refuses to recognize His sovereignty over His entire universe including pain and suffering.
14. To such souls God will bring a certain measure of pain and suffering to press His point. Nevertheless, in the midst of Administering pain and suffering another principle will be found. God always tempers justice with mercy. No pain and suffering is ever as full or as intense as it could be.
15. The one exception to this policy of tempering justice with mercy is what happened to Christ at Calvary. At the Cross the full fury of divine wrath was poured out upon Jesus. But even there Jesus endured the cross for the joy He knew waited for Him on the other side of the Great Ordeal.
 - *Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*
16. Because God's mercy tempers God's Administration of pain and suffering there are many spiritual lessons that can be learned when the hurting soul begins to ask, "Why?" There are some divine answers to that question (see Doctrine of Suffering).
17. If the spiritual lessons of life through pain and suffering are not learned initially they might be repeated until the soul submits itself to the sovereignty of God and to spiritual realities.

18. As there are spiritual realities so there are spiritual deceptions. It is not always easy to distinguish between the two. Spiritual counterfeits try to imitate the true gospel just as Satan sends his emissaries as messengers of light. *2 Corinthians 11:15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*
19. Nevertheless, there are some ways to distinguish spiritual deception from true spirituality.
20. Observe the characteristics of spiritual deception.
- Spiritual deception casts doubt upon the Word of God (Gen. 3:1). In the matter of pain and suffering the Enemy comes to suggest a question to the mind which asks, “Would a good and loving God inflict pain and suffering upon His children?” The Satanic answer expected is, “*No! Because God is good and kind and merciful He does not want His children to suffer.*” Once the mind accepts this presuppositional thought then the Evil One can continue to lead and mislead the soul step by step from the Sovereign and from true spirituality in the same way a child who has been spanked by a loving parent can be lead and thus mislead to believe his parent does not “really” care for him.
 - Spiritual deception denies the Word of God (Gen. 3:4). In the matter of pain and suffering there is the simplicity of God’s word to Moses as He takes full responsibility for creating the dumb, the deaf and the blind (Ex. 4:11). However, the Evil One comes to snatch the good word of God from the heart by boldly denying what God declares.
 - Spiritual deception pretends to honor God but debases Him. In the name of protecting one part of God’s essence, such as His love or mercy, another part of God’s essence is sacrificed such as His sovereignty over the universe, including pain and suffering. That is taken and ascribed to Satan, Sin or Self.
 - Spiritual deception offers to the mind an alternative spiritual but mythical reality (Genesis 3:5). Specifically, every false teacher eventually declares that man is a god, shall be God or at the very least is God like to an extent the Bible never authorizes.
 - Spiritual deception blurs the distinction between the Creator and His creation because the original intent of Satan has never been repented of, which is to be like God. *Isaiah 14:12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! 13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.*

- Spiritual deception does not allow for the rule of reason or objective reality. No thinking person diagnosed and dying of terminal cancer would articulate words to the contrary or pretend they were healed while undergoing chemo treatment apart from spiritual deception. It is only when people divorce themselves from objective reality they know the judgment of God who sends them false prophets to follow and a lie to believe because they rejected the truth. *Jeremiah 7:8 Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. 2 Thessalonians 2:11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:*
- Spiritual deception takes biblical words and gives them new meaning. One biblical word that is given a new meaning is the word “*faith*.” The *Bible* defines faith in Hebrews 11:1. “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*” Faith has substance. Faith is not a mystical idea but has an object and it is always the object of faith that receives the merit. The sinner is commanded to look to Christ and live. Christ is the object of faith. *John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* The soul is commanded to believe God. God is the object of faith and receives the merit. *Mark 11:22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.*
- Faith never sets aside objective reality to believe what is not real. Only God can declare what is real not self. Therefore, until God gives a person permission to believe in a healing or a job, or a source of income, having faith in faith that such and such will be acquired, or happen, is a delusion of grandeur and borders on the psychotic not the spiritual. For example, Paul was never given permission to believe he would be healed. In fact, God told him just the opposite. It would have been foolishness, not faith, had Paul insisted that his throne in the flesh be removed despite the fact he prayed three times for its removal. In contrast, when Hezekiah was given permission to believe he would live for fifteen more years it would have been foolish for him to have worried about dying before then. *2 Kings 20:6 And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.*
- Spiritual deception does not want the soul to have faith in God and so the object of faith is redirected. Faith is redirected to Satan. The Evil One is given honor and glory and power which he does not have, though he lies and claims to have the power to give the kingdoms of this world to those who will worship him. But that is not possible, “*For the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof*” (*1 Corinthians 10:26*).
- The Evil One lies and pretends he has the Godlike authority and ability to administer sickness and disease and death but in *Scripture* it is never apart from divine permission. All Satan can do is roar like a hungry lion seeking whom he may devour. Satan is a defeated enemy, a bound foe, and without power to hurt anyone though he may desire souls as he did Peter to sift him as wheat. Why could Satan not get to Peter? Because Christ had prayed for him. *Luke 22:31*

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: 32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. Faith is redirected to self. It is appalling to listen to the testimonies of those who believe their lack of faith is something to tell and retell on their journey to health and wealth and prosperity – even when in reality they are not healthy, wealthy or prosperous.

- Spiritual deception makes merchandise of God's people. One of the most clever forms of making merchandise of God's people is by persuading individuals that if they support a particular ministry with Seed Faith money, always money, there will be a financial reward many times over in return. That is not spirituality, that is simply a good business transaction. In the *Bible* the emphasis is upon divesting oneself of riches in order to help others. To make merchandise of God's people the opposite has to be practiced and today it is being done.

21. In order to recover from spiritual deception God has given to the church a twelve step program.

- Step 1. Go back to the basics. Return to the *Bible*. Read again Genesis 1-3 and rediscover the sovereign God is the ultimate Author and Administer of all pain and suffering.
- Step 2. Confess the error of believing the lies of the Evil One and embracing a philosophy of spiritual deception. *1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
- Step 3. Rededicate the soul and body to God. *Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*
- Step 4. Sanctify the body unto holiness. Make it a suitable habitation for the holy God. *1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: 4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; 1 Corinthians 6:19 What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? The body is no place for covetousness, which is idolatry, to exist. Colossians 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:*
- Step 5. Remember the words of Jesus when He taught that pain and suffering shall be part of the Journey into Grace for His disciples. *Matthew 10:18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. 19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. 20 For it is*

not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. 21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. 22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. The apostles taught the same truth. *Acts 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*

- Step 6. Submit to God's sovereignty. *1 Peter 3:17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. 18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: Stand with Job and say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15).*
- Step 7. Rejoice when the time of pain and suffering comes. *Ephesians 5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; 19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;*
- Step 8. Give thanks in every situation. *Ephesians 5: 20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;*
- Step 9. Learn the spiritual lessons of life that God brings to mind through pain and suffering such as divine faithfulness. *Hebrews 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

Some years ago, on a hot summer day in south Florida, a little boy decided to go for a swim in the old swimming hole that was behind his house. In a hurry to dive into the cool water, he ran out the back door, leaving behind shoes, socks, and shirt as he went. He flew into the water, not realizing that as he swam toward the middle of the lake, an alligator was swimming toward the shore. In the house, his mother was looking out the window.

She saw the two as they got closer and closer together. In utter fear, she ran toward the water, yelling to her son as loudly as she could. Hearing her voice, the little boy became alarmed, and made a U-turn to swim to his mother. It was too late. Just as he reached her, the alligator reached him. From the dock, the mother grabbed her little boy by the arms, just as the alligator snatched his legs. That began a very incredible tug-of-war between the two. The alligator was much stronger than the mother, but the mother was much too passionate to let go.

A farmer happened to drive by, heard her screams, raced from his truck, took aim, and shot the alligator. Remarkably, after weeks and weeks in the hospital, the little boy survived. His legs were extremely scarred by the vicious attack of the animal. On his arms, there were deep scratches where his mother's fingernails dug into his flesh in her effort to hang on to the son she loved. The newspaper reporter, who interviewed the boy after the trauma, asked the boy if he would show him his scars.

The boy lifted his pantlegs. Then, with obvious pride, he said to the reporter, "*But look at my arms. I have great scars on my arms, too. I have them because my Mom wouldn't let go.*"

You and I can identify with that little boy. We have scars, too. No, not from an alligator, but the scars of a painful past or the scares of pain and suffering unwanted and unexpected. Some of those scars are unsightly, and have caused us deep regret. But, some wounds, my friend, are because God has refused to let go. In the midst of your struggle, He's been right there, holding on to you.

- Step 10. Become more than conquerors. *Romans 8:37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*
- Step 11. Anticipate the future with the hope of glory based on the promises of God. *John 14:1 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. Hebrews 9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*
- Step 12. Never again doubt God's sovereignty over pain and suffering or His great love. *Isaiah 55:8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.*