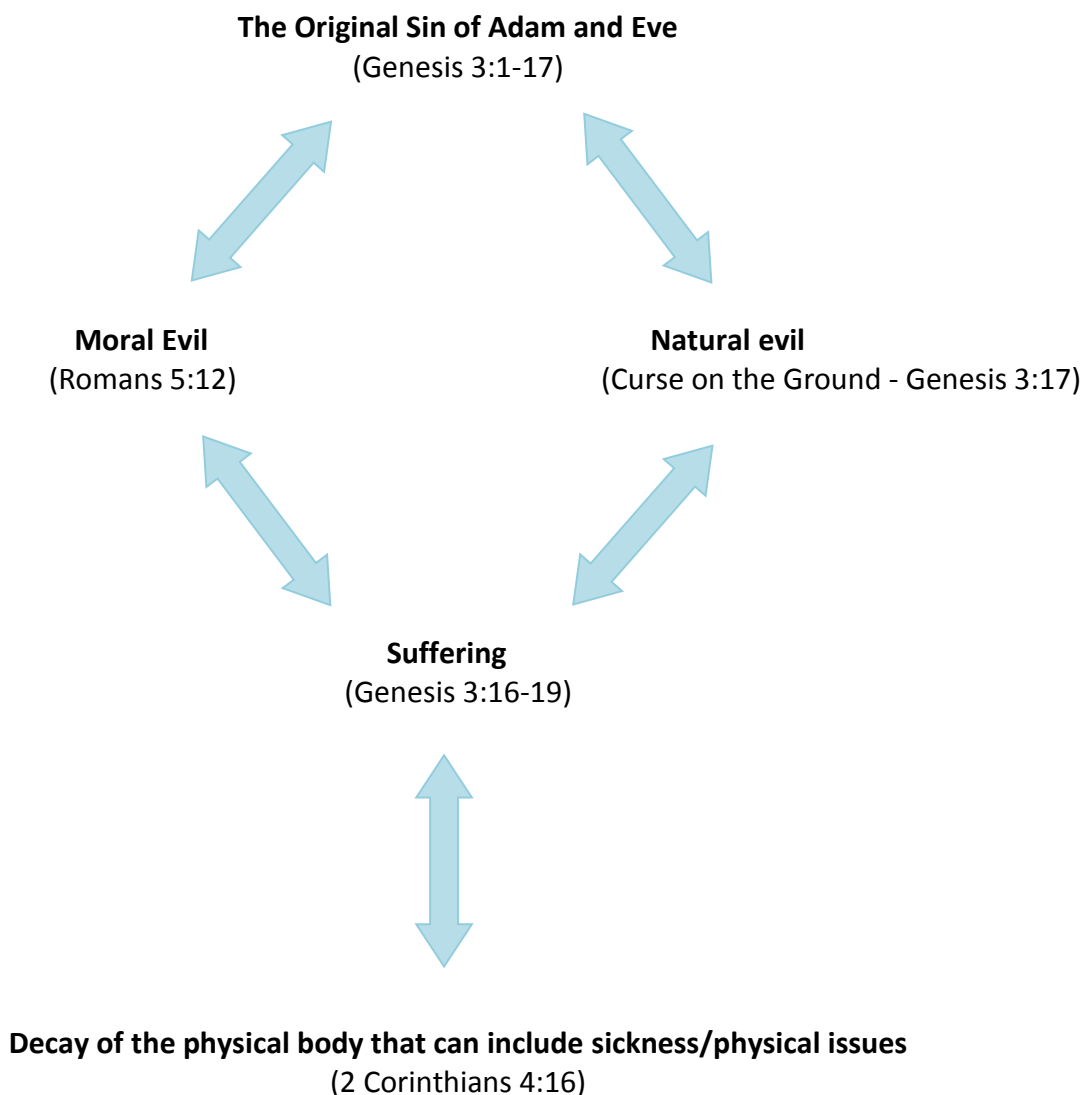


**Definition of suffering:** to experience pain or distress as the result of choices within our control and choices beyond our control

**The Origin of Suffering**



**I. Key principles we can glean from the diagram above:**

- A. Evil exists in the world as a result of Adam and Eve sinning against God.
- B. Suffering and physical issues exist as a result of evil coming into the world by way of sin.
- C. Sickness and physical issues are a byproduct of suffering that exists as a result of evil coming into the world by sin.
- D. Therefore sin, evil, suffering, and sickness/physical issues are not a reflection of the character of God but a reflection of the character of man who chose to rebel against God, bringing these results.
- E. Whereas the world wants to blame God for the evil, suffering, and sickness/physical issues that exist, we must blame ourselves because it is a by-product of our unyielding disobedience towards God.
- F. Even though evil, suffering, and sickness/physical issues exist as a result of the choice of man, God has allowed it and has ultimate control over the extent He will let all evil, suffering, and sickness/physical issues get to, as well as the deliverance He will bring to evil, suffering, and sickness/physical issues that exist in our lifetime.
- G. God is using evil, suffering, and sickness/physical issues to accomplish his comprehensive plan that will one day be revealed to all mankind and creation.
- H. For a time, God is allowing man to make these choices. However, there will come a time where man will have to give an account for the choices he has made. This final judgment will result in either being cast into the eternal lake of fire for unrepentant sin, or being ushered into a life of eternal bliss for those who have put their faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ to deliver them from the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and soon the presence of sin unto a new and right standing and relationship with God.
- I. Until then, we must learn how to live in a world where the sin of man has brought the consequences of evil, suffering, and sickness/physical issues.
- J. Let us consider sickness/physical issues and how to handle it in light of this reality and in relation to this current coronavirus experience.

**II. As result of the fall, we may experience sickness or physical issues for various reasons:**

- A. Sickness or physical issues may exist as the natural consequence of a decaying body due to the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, affecting all of mankind.

*Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying,  
yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.*

- 2 Corinthians 4:16

*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin,  
and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.*

- Romans 5:12

- B. Sickness or physical issues may exist because Satan may have been given authority to inflict it for reasons not known to mankind.

*Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." The Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause." Satan answered the Lord and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face." So the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life." Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes.*

- Job 2:1-8

- C. Sickness or physical issues may exist to expose sin and to bring people to examine themselves and repent of sin accordingly.

*Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.*

- 1 Corinthians 11:27-32

- D. Sickness or physical issues may exist to keep people from sinning.

*Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

- 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

- E. Sickness or physical issues may exist so that God may be glorified as He heals the sickness or physical issue accordingly.

*Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." But when Jesus heard this, He said, "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it."*

- John 11:1-4

*As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him."*

- John 9:1-3

- F. Sickness or physical issues may exist as a means to demonstrate the sovereignty of God as He brings people to see healing is not merely a physical issue left to the hands of man but a spiritual issue controlled by the hand of God, demonstrating man's need for God.

*And one of the crowd answered Him, "Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; and whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not do it." And He answered them and said, "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me!" They brought the boy to Him. When he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he began rolling around and foaming at the mouth. And He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!" And Jesus said to him, "'If You can?' All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief." When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again." After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, "He is dead!" But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up. When He came into the house, His disciples began questioning Him privately, "Why could we not drive it out?" And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer."*

- Mark 9:17-29

**III. Therefore when we look at the coronavirus experience, we must consider that:**

- A. The coronavirus experience is a reminder of the ugliness of sin and its detrimental effect on the world.
- B. The coronavirus experience is a reminder that all is not well in the world; we are in need of a Savior for our souls, not just a cure for the coronavirus' impact on our bodies.
- C. Even though we belong to Jesus Christ, this does not mean that we will not suffer from the coronavirus. But if we should suffer from it, we can expect God's grace, goodness, and power to carry us through it to His ultimate glory and our greatest good.
- D. Life is more than pursuing the well-being of our bodies; we must also consider the well-being of our souls.
- E. The coronavirus experience is a reminder that we must not live our lives merely to avoid sickness/physical issues and death but to know Jesus, to become like Jesus, and to be useful to Jesus in the midst of potential sickness/physical issues and death.
- F. The coronavirus experience is a reminder of mankind's inability to control life or to control the outcome of his existence. Therefore, mankind cannot cure coronavirus unless God provides the cure.

**IV. Consequently, we can help people deal with the coronavirus experience through thinking about and practicing these things:**

- A. In relation to the coronavirus experience, we must embrace the fact that the end goal is not physical healing; the end goal is spiritual revival unto a new and right standing and relationship with God or renewed fellowship with God in the midst of the coronavirus experience, as we pursue a cure and healing from the virus.
- B. Therefore, we must focus more on coming to Christ or becoming like Christ as the primary goal, and view finding a cure and healing from the coronavirus as the secondary goal. Life is more than physical healing from a disease; it is spiritual healing through the disease which would result in eternal life with Christ Jesus our Lord.
- C. We must access God's grace to function responsibly even when we feel horrible from the effect of the coronavirus as we pursue finding a cure and healing from the virus.
- D. We must practice thanksgiving even when we feel terrible, knowing God is working out His glory and our ultimate good through this coronavirus experience as we pursue finding a cure and healing from the virus.
- E. We must evaluate anything that has been taken away from us as a result of this coronavirus experience, determine if we had any form of worship towards those things, and repent accordingly.
- F. If death should begin to knock at our door as result of the coronavirus, may we, like Paul, be prepared to say that "to be absent from the body is to be present with Lord." We can only say this if we have embraced the fact that our ultimate life is not derived from physically healthy bodies or this physical existence but from eternal life with Jesus Christ. This eternal life will lead to us being in the new heaven and new earth with Christ Jesus our Lord.

“The development of medicine in a purely naturalist perspective served to objectify illness, making of it a reality considered in itself and for itself. Illness came to be construed as uniquely physiological and somehow independent of the afflicted person. Rather than treat the person, many physicians today treat illnesses or organs. This fact complicated by diagnostic methods that are increasingly quantitative and abstract, together with therapeutic methods that are more and more technical has had as its primary consequence the effect of considerably depersonalizing medical practice. This factor of course, only increases the isolation and distress of the ill person. .... By regarding sickness and suffering as autonomous realities of a purely physiological character and consequently as susceptible to treatment that is purely technical, applied to the body alone modern medicine does practically nothing to help patients assume them. Rather, it encourages patients to consider that both their state and their fate lie entirely in the hands of the physicians, that the only solution to their trouble is purely medical, and that the only way they can endure their suffering is to look passively to medicine for any hope of relief and healing.” .... The dominant values of modern Western civilization, as a matter of fact encourage just such an attitude. The overvaluation of biological life, considered as the only form of life possible for man; psychological health considered as the enjoyment of a state of well-being conceived almost exclusively in material terms of which the body appears as the essential organ; the fear of all that can endanger, reduce or eliminate that enjoyment (of biological life); the refusal of all forms of suffering and the suppression of pain as the highest value of civilization and the consummation of social development; the fear of biological death considered as the absolute end of human existence: all of this leads a great many of our contemporaries to expect that salvation comes from medicine and encourages them to make of the physician a new priest of modern times, a king who holds over them the power of life or death, and a prophet of their ultimate destiny.”<sup>1</sup> (parenthesis added for emphasis)

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Claude Larchet, *The Theology of Illness*, (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002), 9-11.