

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. This is the second day that two teachers explain the good news from the Bible. The good news in the Bible answers 5 questions of people: One. "How do we know that God exists?" Two. "Why is there so much suffering and death in the world?" Three. "What is the solution to the problem of suffering and death?" Four. "Which response does God require of people?" Five. "What may every Christian expect from the new life in Christ?" As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today's teaching is: A DISCIPLE KNOWS THE REASONS FOR SUFFERING AND DEATH.

(S) Why is there so much suffering and death in the world? The Bible tells us that there are 5 reasons why all people suffer and eventually die.

(T)      **THE FIRST REASON FOR SUFFERING IS GODLESSNESS.**

Let me read Romans 1:18-23. "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For though they knew God, they neither glorified him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles."

What is the meaning of godlessness? Godlessness means two things. You are *godless* when you do not believe in the existence of God at all and thus live an atheistic life-style in which you are your own god that does what you please. Or you are *godless* when you do believe that god exists, but your god is not the God of the Bible! Your god is either an idol or it is a god that is different than the God of the Bible! In short, godlessness is living without the true God, who revealed himself through the prophets of the Old Testament and through Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Why do people have a different god than the God of the Bible? Many people have a different god than the god of the Bible, because they want a god that *does not require them to repent and be completely transformed!* They want a god that allows them to continue their sinful life-style, their power play in politics, their unjust wars, their corruption in business and their immorality with women. Many other people have a different god than the God of the Bible, because they want a god that *requires them to save themselves!* They want a god that allows them to earn their own righteousness by keeping religious laws or by doing good works. Both groups of people control who they believe god is and control their own life-style!

However, you cannot know the God of the Bible unless the God of the Bible reveals who he is! And when you get to know the God of the Bible, you must change! On the one hand, you cannot continue to live in sin! You must be completely transformed! You must be born-again! On the other hand, you cannot continue to justify yourself by saying that you are keeping the religious laws! You must abandon your own effort to justify or save yourself and accept the justification or salvation of the God of the Bible! You cannot justify or save yourself! The God of the Bible must justify and save you!

What are the consequences of godlessness? Godlessness affects your mind and your heart. The Bible says, "Their thinking becomes futile". The thinking of godless people is worthless in the eyes of God. Their thinking is useless and fruitless, because they do not know the truth that God has revealed in the Bible and in Jesus Christ. Without God's truth and wisdom, people live in a world of lies and foolishness. They deceive and are deceived. Thus, they suffer themselves and they cause suffering for others! The Bible also says, "Their foolish hearts become darkened". Godless people lack the necessary divine *light* to live a moral life. They cannot find the necessary divine power to be transformed. Just like you cannot pick yourself off the ground by pulling on your own shoelaces, so you cannot save or transform yourself! By remaining godless you will continue to suffer yourself and will continue to cause suffering to others.

Summary. *People suffer either because they deny the existence of the God of the Bible or because they have a different god than the God of the Bible. People suffer because they are godless!*

(S)      **THE SECOND REASON FOR SUFFERING IS WICKEDNESS.**

Let me read Romans 1:24-32. "Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator - who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a deprived mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, and ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them."

What is the meaning of wickedness? While godlessness refers to the wrong relationship with God, *wickedness* refers to the wrong relationship with people. People invent many ways to do evil. People drag one another into indecent and depraved life-styles. And people even approve of the evil in the world – they approve of wars, murder and unjust oppression of the weak and poor. They approve of the persecution of people that do not share their views. Consider the wickedness listed in Romans 1: sexual immorality and perversion, commercial greed and deceit, social gossiping and boasting and political senselessness and faithlessness. No wonder, when people do these things to one another, they all suffer!

Why do people do these wicked things to one another? The Bible says that people's relationship to God determines their relationship to other people! The opposite is also true: their relationship to other people reflects their relationship to God. If they do not love their neighbour, they cannot love God! If they are not truthful to their neighbour, they are not truthful to God. If they do not forgive their neighbour, God definitely does not forgive them! When people exchange the true God for a false god, or simply are their own god, then the true God of the Bible gives them over to the sinful desires of their heart. Then God allows people to become what they want to become and to do what they want to do. Thus, people suffer the consequences of their own desires and choices. Because they want to be *godless*, that is, without the God of the Bible, God gives them over to become *wicked*, that is, God allows them to taste what a life without the true God of the Bible is like!

Summary. *People suffer because they do wickedness, promote wickedness or approve of wickedness. They pervert one another and harm one another. People suffer, because they are wicked!*

#### **(T) THE THIRD REASON FOR SUFFERING IS FALSE BELIEFS.**

Let me read Romans 1:18 and 25 again. "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who *suppress the truth* by their wickedness. They *exchanged the truth* of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator."

What is the truth? The truth is the truth about *who God really is* and *what God really said and did!* God is not simply the god of any religion! The true God is the God who revealed himself through the prophets and finally through Jesus Christ. God did not reveal himself through any prophet, but only through the prophets of the Bible! God did not reveal himself through this or that religious concept of Jesus, but through the Jesus Christ of the Bible! The truth about who God really is and what God really said and did is not found in any religious book except the Bible! The truth about salvation of believers and judgement of non-believers is only found in the Bible! The truth about your real identity and the real purpose of your life is found only in the Bible! The truth about *your identity that gives complete security* is found only in the Bible. Only the God of the Bible says that you are unconditionally loved and permanently accepted in Jesus Christ. In Isaiah 43:1-4 the God of the Bible says, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. ... You are precious in my eyes and honoured in my sight, ... I love you." The truth is that only the God of the Bible says to his own people, "You are precious in my eyes! You are loved! You are mine!" That is the truth about *your identity that gives complete security!* The truth about *your destination that gives absolute significance* is found only in the Bible! Only the God of the Bible says that your task on this earth is permanently meaningful and important when it is the task, which Jesus Christ gives to you. In Jeremiah 29:11 the God of the Bible says, "I know the plans I have for you, ... plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." The truth is that only the God of the Bible says to his own people, "Your work will be prosperous! Your work will be hopeful! Your work has a real future!" That is the truth about *your destination that gives absolute significance!* The truth is therefore inseparably bound to the God who revealed himself in the Bible! Only the truth in the Bible requires that people must change! They must be transformed! They must be born-again!

How do people suppress or exchange the truth? When people do not want to know the truth in the Bible or do not want to live by the truth of the Bible, then they *suppress the truth revealed in the Bible!* For example, they feel ashamed to be associated with the God of the Bible and so they ignore or even deny the truth of the Bible. When people deliberately believe in false religious beliefs, false religious laws and false religious values, then they *exchange the truth revealed in the Bible!* And whenever people suppress or exchange the truth that is revealed in the Bible, namely, that God loves and accepts them in Jesus Christ, they suffer. And whenever they suppress or exchange the truth revealed in the Bible, namely, that God wants to give them an important, meaningful and satisfying task together with Jesus Christ in this life, they suffer!

Summary. *People without the God of the Bible are also without the truth! They do not know the truth about God or the truth about themselves. They don't know who they are, where they come from or where they are going. They suffer because they feel very insecure and very insignificant or because they live a destructive wicked life. People suffer because they believe in false beliefs and values.*

By nature, every person has a wrong relationship to God, a wrong relationship to other people and a wrong relationship to himself. By nature, every person is godless, wicked and beliefs in false beliefs and values. The Bible calls these three wrong relationships with the one word *sin*. Conclusion. The real reason for so much suffering and death in the world is *sin*!

**(S) THE FOURTH REASON FOR SUFFERING IS DEATH.**

Let me read Romans 6:23. "The wages of sin is death." The consequence of sin is death! What is the real nature of death? Death means the *separation* of your soul from your body so that your body decays in the grave. Death means your separation from the family and friends that you love. You are forced to leave them behind! Death means your separation from your possessions, the loss of all your education and the loss of your job. You must leave behind all your accomplishments and your position on earth. Nothing of all you have worked for so hard during your lifetime can you take along with you in death! Death is so terrible that you do not want to think or talk about it. Death becomes the climax of all your suffering! Death is also terrible for those who are left behind. They are separated from you and continually miss you. They fear death because they don't know what to expect when it is their turn to die! All people fear death.

Summary. *Death means separation from everything on earth and causes untold suffering to yourself and to all whom you leave behind. Death is the greatest enemy of most people. People suffer because they know they will die.*

**(T) THE FIFTH REASON FOR SUFFERING IS GOD'S JUDGEMENT.**

The worst suffering are caused by God's judgements. People already now suffer because of God's present judgements! Let me read Galatians 6:7-8. "God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction." God already judges people now in this life on earth by letting people suffer the consequences of their own sins! If you sow laziness, then God allows you to reap poverty! If you sow hatred, then God allows you to reap broken relationships. If you sow tyranny or terrorism, then God allows you to reap war and complete destruction of everyone you love and everything you possess! God judges you by allowing the consequences of your own godlessness and wickedness to catch up with you! Because you reject the God of the Bible, reject the words of God through the prophets in the Bible or reject the fact that the God of the Bible revealed himself through Jesus Christ, God gives you no peace, no satisfaction, no security and no significance in your life on this earth!

The God of the Bible controls the universe, including the events of history and the forces of nature. In the Bible we read that in times when people disobeyed God or when they broke their relationship with God, God withdrew his care or God punished them. The prophet Haggai (1:3-11) says that because people are only thinking of their own houses and lives, God withdraws rain, food and clothing from them, he causes their income to be insufficient and blows their high expectations of life away. The prophet Ezekiel (14:6,21) says that because people do not repent from their detestable practices, God sends all kinds of disasters like earthquakes, floods, and especially draughts and famines on them in order to show his displeasure against their sin and to warn them to repent and turn back to him!

The worst suffering will be in the future at God's final judgement! Let me read Hebrews 9:27. "Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement." The Bible says that death is not the end, but God's final judgement will be the end! When Jesus Christ returns to this earth, he will judge all the people that ever lived. He will separate the Christians from the non-Christians. He will judge the non-Christians for their unbelief (Jn 3:18-21,36) and for the shortcomings in their life (Mat 25:41-46). All people who disobeyed the gospel about Jesus Christ will be punished with everlasting separation from God (2 Thes 1:8). God will judge the needy with righteousness, the poor with justice, but send the rich away empty handed and slay the wicked. He will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their sins. He will put an end to the arrogance and pride of people and bring down the mighty rulers from their thrones. The place of eternal punishment is called *the lake of fire* or *hell*. Luke 16:23-26 says that hell is a place of fire, agony and torment. Jesus Christ warns you that the suffering of the judgement of God is far worse than all the present suffering on earth!

Summary. People suffer because of God's judgements!

**(S) ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. How will you answer the question, "If you were God, what would you do to solve the problem of suffering and death?" We will discuss this question tomorrow. Listen tomorrow to Discipleship training on the air.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and make disciples" and Internet on www. Etc.

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to "Discipleship training on the air".