

Why Suffering, Lord?

Why is there sickness, suffering and death? You are all-powerful and merciful, why then do you withhold healing, Lord? Could it be that you don't hear our groans or you don't notice the tears upon our cheeks?

In the beginning you created everything good and perfect. You formed us in your own image and called us to enjoy your fellowship and sweet love. You also warned us that sin brings forth death. But our first parents disobeyed and rebelled against your rule, and we too, by our sins, persist in that rebellion against our Maker.

Consequently, today we do not see a beautiful garden, but thorns and briars, drought and corruption. Enough beauty remains that we may be reminded of your goodness. But now our joy is mixed with sorrow, health is endangered by sickness, and life is threatened by death, so that we may never forget how hideous is our sin in your holy eyes, and how bitter is its fruit.

You had warned us in the beginning, and you warn us again and again. If we remain obstinate and unrepentant, there will be far worse sufferings in the unquenchable fire of hell. Teach me, O Lord, to walk in your fear, to despise what you despise, to hate sin which has brought such widespread destruction and misery. Grant me a repentant heart, to shy away from every form of evil, and take up the narrow road that leads to everlasting life.

When you visit me with sickness, Lord, grant me faith that I may trust in you, because you have ever been and remain in perfect control of everything. A sparrow will not fall to the ground unless you will it, even so my life is in your hands, Lord. If you desire, you can heal me; if not, may your will be done. You do not capriciously put me to the test, but in wisdom you are able to overrule my sufferings to accomplish your good purpose for my welfare and for your own glory.

When I lack understanding and my sight is blurred by tears, teach me to remain silent and to refrain from uttering a single word of protest against you. When you will have me pass through the valley of the shadow of death, you will surely remember your promise. You will not leave me alone in the darkness of the night. Be close to me, O Lord; you are my help and my only comfort. I kiss your invisible hand that guides me, and wholeheartedly worship you, the only blessed God.

Draw me closer to the cross, O Lord, for you are not a stranger to suffering and pain. Lord, you left heaven's glory, and willingly chose to serve rather than be served. You were crowned with a crown of thorns, O my King; they stripped you and nailed you to the accursed tree. You, the holy and pure, did not deserve to suffer and die; but you took upon yourself *my* sickness and *my* sin. You accepted the punishment that was due to *me*. Your cross, O Lord, is my healing; your blood cleanses me from all my blemishes and shame.

So I look forward with hope; the grave isn't the final stop of this short journey. Just as you conquered death and arose victoriously from the grave, O Lord, I will live again when, by your powerful word, you will call me back to life. You will clothe me with an incorruptible body, wipe away every tear from my eyes, heal me from every disease and make me completely whole. On that day, O Lord, I will ask no more about suffering.