

PLEASANT RIDGE BAPTIST CHURCH

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Why does God allow the innocent to suffer?

There is so much [suffering](#) in the world, and it is felt by everyone to one degree or another. Sometimes, people suffer as the direct result of their own poor choices, sinful actions, or willful irresponsibility; in those cases, we see the truth of [Proverbs 13:15](#), “The way of the treacherous is their ruin” (ESV). But what about the victims of the treachery? What about the innocent who suffer? Why would God allow that?

It is human nature to try to find a correlation between bad behavior and bad circumstances and, conversely, between good behavior and blessings. The desire to link sin to suffering is so strong that Jesus dealt with the issue at least twice. “As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus” ([John 9:1–3](#)). The disciples made the mistake of assuming that the innocent would never suffer and assigned personal guilt to the blind man (or to his parents). Jesus corrected their thinking, saying, “This happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him” (verse 3). The man’s blindness was not the result of personal sin; rather, God had a higher purpose for the suffering.

Another time, Jesus commented on the deaths of some people killed in an accident: “Those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish” ([Luke 13:4–5](#)). In this case, Jesus again discounted the notion that tragedy and suffering are the result of personal sin. At the same time, Jesus emphasized the fact that we live in a world full of sin and its effects; therefore, everyone must [repent](#).

This brings us to the consideration of whether such a thing as “the innocent,” technically speaking, even exists. According to the Bible, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” ([Romans 3:23](#)). Therefore, no one is “innocent” in the sense of being sinless. We were all born with a [sinful nature](#), inherited from Adam. And, as we’ve already seen, everyone suffers, regardless of whether or not the suffering can be linked to a specific personal sin. Sin’s effects permeate everything; the world is fallen, and all creation suffers as a result ([Romans 8:22](#)).

Most heartbreaking of all is the suffering of a child. Children are as close to innocence as we ever see in this world, and for them to suffer is truly tragic. Sometimes, innocent children suffer because of the sin of others: neglect, abuse, drunk driving, etc. In those cases, we can definitely say that the suffering is the result of personal sin (just not theirs), and we learn the lesson that our sin always affects others around us. Other times, innocent children suffer because of what some might call “acts of God”: natural disasters, accidents, childhood cancer, etc. Even in those cases, we can say that the suffering is the result of sin, generally speaking, because we live in a sinful world.

The good news is that God did not leave us here to suffer pointlessly. Yes, the innocent suffer (see [Job 1–2](#)), but God can redeem that suffering. Our loving and merciful God has a perfect plan to use that suffering to accomplish His threefold purpose. First, He uses pain and suffering to draw us to Himself so that we will cling to Him. Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble” ([John 16:33](#)). Trials and distress are not something unusual in life; they are part of what it means to be human in a fallen world. In Christ we have an anchor that holds fast in all the storms of life, but, if we never sail into those storms, how would we know that? It is in times of despair and sorrow that we reach out to Him, and, if we are His children, we always find Him there waiting to comfort and uphold us through it all. In this way, God proves His faithfulness to us and ensures that we will stay close to Him. An added benefit is that as we experience God’s comfort through trials, we are then able to comfort others in the same way ([2 Corinthians 1:4](#)).

Second, He proves to us that our faith is real through the suffering and pain that are inevitable in this life. How we respond to suffering, especially when we are innocent of wrongdoing, is determined by the genuineness of our faith. Those with faith in Jesus, “the pioneer and perfecter of faith” ([Hebrews 12:2](#)), will not be crushed by suffering but will come through the trial with their faith intact, having been “tested by fire” so that it “may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” ([1 Peter 1:7, ESV](#)). The faithful do not shake their fists at God or question His goodness; rather, they “consider it pure joy” ([James 1:2](#)), knowing that trials prove that they are truly the children of God. “Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him” ([James 1:12](#)).

Finally, God uses suffering to take our eyes off this world and turn them to the next. The Bible continually exhorts us to not get caught up in the things of this world but to look forward to the world to come. The innocent suffer in this world, but this world and all that is in it will pass away; the kingdom of God is eternal. Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world” ([John 18:36](#)), and those who follow Him do not see the things of this life, good or bad, as the end of the story. Even the sufferings we endure, as terrible as they can be, “are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” ([Romans 8:18](#)).

Could God prevent all suffering? Of course He could. But He assures us that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” ([Romans 8:28, KJV](#)). Suffering—even the suffering of the innocent—is part of the “all things” that God is using to accomplish His good purposes, ultimately. His plan is perfect, His character is flawless, and those who trust Him will not be disappointed.

God's Blessings May 1, 2022

Budget Needs:	\$7,265.61
Budget Receipt:	\$10,213.00
Annie Armstrong:	\$375.00
Baptist Men	\$40.00
Sunday School Attendance	100
Worship Attendance	196

God's Blessings May 8, 2022

Budget Needs:	\$7,265.61
Budget Receipt:	\$14,193.00
Baptist Men	\$90.00
Sunday School Attendance	110
Worship Attendance	195

God's Blessings May 15, 2022

Budget Needs:	\$7,265.61
Budget Receipt:	\$4,076.00
Baptist Men	\$40.00
Sunday School Attendance	109
Worship Attendance	168

God's Blessings May 22, 2022

Budget Needs:	\$7,265.61
Budget Receipt:	\$5,174.00
Baptist Men	\$40.00
Sunday School Attendance	89
Worship Attendance	188

God's Blessings May 29, 2022

Budget Needs:	\$7,265.61
Budget Receipt:	\$7,004.00
Baptist Men	\$40.00
Sunday School Attendance	95
Worship Attendance	176

Pastor's Corner

On Monday we observed Memorial Day, mostly as a family day with picnics and beginning of vacations, long weekends, etc. Some families it hits a bit closer to home, as these families have lost loved ones in service of our Country. It was first widely observed on May 30, 1868 to commemorate the sacrifices of Civil War soldiers, and since then it is an observance of all those who died in military service. It is a time to count the cost of the liberty and freedom that we share as American citizens! Let us never take for granted the cost of the defense of liberty. Ronald Regan said, *"Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We did not pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free."*

Today we live in a broken society, it is time, now, for us to pray for our country and its leadership. Patriotism, what used to hold us together, is fractured and is urgently in need of mending and re-weaving what is the fabric of our strength and strong standing throughout the world. We are blessed to live in, still, the greatest of all nations. **America, God shed His grace on Thee!**

Your friend and pastor,
John Newton

Tri-C for June: Peanut Butter Donations:

Ark Meal for June 21: Pastor John & Cindy

New Sunday School Class: Attention Parents: We have started a Sunday School Class for 2, 3, and 4 year olds. This class is located in the Toddler Room. We are excited to see you there!

Vacation Bible School: Zoomerang! June 5th—9th, meal at 6:00 in the Fellowship Hall, Bible School 6:30pm—8:45pm. Join us for a cookout and kickoff on Sunday, June 5th at 5:00pm!

Graduate's Recognition: Do you have a High School or College grad you would like to have recognized for their achievement? PRBC will be recognizing graduates on June 5th and Pastor Brandon needs to know who!

EmpowHer: Sunday June 26 Immediately after service and in the Fellowship Hall. EmpowHer is designed for young ladies, ages ten and up. It is a training class to equip them to fulfill their calling as an ambassador for Christ. The message will be "You are created in the image of God", as well as learning to cook a 4 ingredient dinner. For more information, contact Debbie Garner or Barbara Cason.

Hey PRBC!

If you have checked out a book from the PRBC Library and are finished with it, would you please return it? There are many books that have been checked out and not returned. Please take a look at home and see if you or your children might have a PRBC book at home. Thanks for your help keeping our libraries full of books for many to enjoy!

ANNIE ARMSTRONG EASTER OFFERING

GOAL \$6000 FINAL: \$5,310.00

PRBC BUSINESS MEETING HIGHLIGHTS MAY

The average Sunday School attendance for April 2022 was 106. The new class for 2-4 year olds has started and is going well.

On Sunday, June 5, the Adult 1 and Adult 2 Sunday school classes will separate into their original classes and locations. Also on June 5, a new Sunday school class for college age students will begin. Annette Blackburn will be the teacher for this class.

The handbells will continue to have monthly practices but will not be performing during summer.

A request for church letter was received from Riverside Baptist Church in Waynesville, NC on behalf of Ashley Wood Stroud.

Steve Martin has stepped down from the Chairman of Deacons position. Kevin Calloway was voted in as the new Chairman. Eddie Settle resigned as the secretary of the deacons. Todd Garner will serve as secretary.

The ARK meal was delivered on May 17 by Brandon and Regina Davis. They were able to serve approximately 20 guests. Volunteers are still needed for this ministry.

The recent workday on the land behind the cemetery was very productive. A road has been cut to access the woodshed, and land is being cleared of trees and debris.

There are many moving parts and lots of people working hard to prepare for VBS. We are still in need of men to help with safety patrol in the parking lot. Volunteers are also needed to make homemade ice cream for the VBS Kickoff on June 5. Please see Robin Callaway to volunteer, or for more information.

Our utility costs are increasing at the church. Please be mindful of thermostat changes, and if you do change the temperature, please do not push the "hold" button, as this will set the temperature until manually changed. The thermostats are preset and will return to the previous setting as long as the hold button is not pressed.