

5. Why Do Righteous People Suffer?

Main Text: Psalm 34:19; Job 1-2; John 16:33

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all." - Psalm 34:19

BIG IDEA

Righteousness is not a guarantee of a pain-free life. Scripture shows that faithful people suffer, yet suffering cannot cancel God's presence, purpose, or final deliverance.

1. CONTEXT

Psalm 34 celebrates God's care for the afflicted, but it does not deny affliction. Job is explicitly described as upright and still experiences severe suffering. Jesus likewise tells His disciples that they will have trouble in the world.

The Bible rejects simplistic equations: suffering does not automatically prove personal sin, and prosperity does not automatically prove righteousness.

2. KEY WORDS / EXEGESIS

Afflictions - troubles, adversities, distress. The plural "many" is intentionally realistic.

Righteous - one who lives in right relationship with God, not one who is immune from the brokenness of the world.

Delivers - God rescues. Scripture includes temporal deliverance, sustaining presence, and ultimately final deliverance in God's kingdom.

3. INTERPRETATION

The Bible does not give one single cause for every instance of suffering. Some suffering results from sin, some from others' actions, some from living in a fallen world, some from persecution, and some remains mysterious. What Scripture consistently gives is God's presence and final hope.

4. DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS

- Have I assumed that suffering means God is displeased with me?
- Have I judged another suffering person too quickly?
- Is my theology strong enough to trust God when life is painful and unexplained?

5. PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Lament honestly rather than denying pain.
- Refuse easy explanations when Scripture does not give them.
- Stand with suffering people through presence, prayer, and practical help.
- Anchor hope in Christ's victory, not in the promise of immediate comfort.

6. GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1 What does Psalm 34:19 say and not say?
- 2 What does Job teach against simplistic explanations of suffering?
- 3 How can the church care for someone whose suffering has no easy answer?

CLOSING PRAYER

God of mercy, meet us in suffering. Keep us from shallow answers and from despair. Give us courage to trust You, compassion to carry one another's burdens, and hope in Christ's final victory. Amen.

Teaching Flow: Hook -> Context -> Exegesis -> Interpretation -> Diagnostic -> Application -> Prayer