



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## Why Suffering?

By Paul Earnhart

Job, out of his wretchedness and deep anguish, once declared, *"Man that is born of women is of few days and full of trouble"* (14:1). It may not be the whole story, but it is a significant part of it. Early and late, all of us will face some heartbreaking adversities. The presence of so much pain in life has caused some to question even the existence of God. The trap in that is that we are arguing against God by a standard which cannot exist without Him.

The adversity in human life is real, not imagined. The Bible deals forthrightly with it. Solomon speaks plainly in Ecclesiastes not only of the presence of pain but the absence of justice in life "under the sun." Most all of us have felt that knowing the why of all this suffering and who or what is behind it might help. It is altogether human to probe into such things, but we need to recognize the limitations of our own knowledge (Deuteronomy 29:29).

In the fall of the year before He died, Jesus and His disciples came upon a beggar in Jerusalem which moved the disciples to ask, *"Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?"* (John 9:1). They presumed that physical tragedy was always a result of divine judgment on sin. Jesus' answer, *"Neither . . . but that the works of God should be revealed in him"* opened up a much broader perspective on suffering. This man's suffering had a purpose. The disciples had seen it only as a consequence.

Where does suffering come from? From several sources. It can come from God, in the general suffering and death unleashed in the world after man sinned (Genesis 3:16-19; Romans 8:20), or in specific cases to humble or strengthen (Job, Miriam, Numbers 12:1-10, Manasseh, 2 Chronicles 33:10-20, and even Paul, 2 Corinthians 12:7).

It can come from Satan, through God's allowance, as illustrated in the case of the horrific suffering of the righteous Job. Even Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was "a messenger of Satan" which God used for very different purposes than the Tempter intended.

It can come as the inevitable fruit of our own sins. *"The way of the transgressor is hard"* (Proverbs 13:15). Sin has its temporal consequences--physical, emotional and social.

Yet, at last, unless there is some direct link to our sin, it is very difficult to know the exact origins of our adversity. And that is just as well, for far more important than knowing why we are suffering is our response to it. Adversity, regardless of its source, is one of God's most effective tools to deepen our faith in Him and transform our lives. So said the Psalmist: *"Before I was afflicted I went astray. But now I keep Your word . . . It is good that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes"* (Psalm 119:67,72). As C. S. Lewis once observed, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, and shouts at us in our pain". And as Scripture observes, *"Whom the Lord loves He chastens"* (Hebrews 12:6).

The anguish of Christ on the cross reflects the influence of God (Isaiah 53:6), and Satan (Luke 22:3,4) and our own sins (1 Peter 2:24). Yet it was our Savior's trusting response to this awful suffering that enabled God to work by it something transcendently wonderful. So it will be with us, if we choose our response to suffering wisely--especially when we don't understand why. *"For our light affliction, which is for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"* (2 Corinthians 4:17). At last, like that ancient blind man, what we suffer here is in order that *"the works of God may be revealed in us."*

Growing In Godliness Blog Friday, July 30, 2021

# Driving School Instructor Sold Fake Passing Grades

by Heath Rogers

A news story caught my attention this past week. A driving school in Seattle, WA, sold fake passing grades to at least 2,000 students seeking driver's licenses. Some of these passing grades sold for as much as \$2,000 to \$4,000. They were sold to applicants who never took tests, and in some cases, did not know basic driving rules.

The story went on to cite an incident in which a state trooper tried to pull over a driver for a lane change violation. Multiple law enforcement vehicles ended up pursuing this driver over ten miles before they finally pulled over. The driver stated they did not know what to do when being pursued by a law enforcement officer. It was discovered this driver had been a student at the driving school under investigation.

I see a spiritual application of this bizarre story. There are plenty of people in the religious world who are selling fake credentials to people who are willing to ignore God's law.

Multitudes of people have been sold counterfeit tickets to Heaven by false teachers. Some claim they are saved by faith only; others claim they are saved because they were baptized as babies; some claim they are saved because they prayed the sinner's prayer; and yet others claim they are saved because they were predestined by God. These poor souls are "driving" around thinking they are all right with God, but one day they will face the Lord and answer to His law.

Likewise, there are many people who believe they can never lose their salvation. They have been told that once they are in God's grace they are always in God's grace and can never be lost. This false doctrine removes the incentive to live faithfully to God. The New Testament plainly teaches that we can fall from grace (Gal. 5:4). The people who have bought this error are not addressing the sin in their lives, and think they are right with God, but one day they will face the Lord and answer to His law.

Jesus said that divorce and remarriage results in adultery, with only one exception. A faithful spouse can put away their unfaithful spouse and remarry with God's approval (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). Many people today are in unscriptural marriages. Those who want to remain in such marriages can easily find preachers and elders who will tell them they are right with God. However, they will one day face the Lord and answer to His law.

Liberal churches of Christ are introducing instrumental music and women preachers into their congregations. Arguments are made by preachers, elders, and professors in their colleges to support these unscriptural innovations, but one day these brethren will face the Lord and answer to His law.

Read the words of Jesus very carefully. "**Not everyone** who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. **Many** will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have **we** not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, '**I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!**'" (Matt. 7:21-23).

It is one thing to be driving without the proper training and lacking a valid driver's license. It is another thing to think you are right with God only to find out too late that you are not. Don't take a chance with your eternal soul.