I Don’t Believe In God Because Of Suffering

(by Dennis Tucker)

There are various reasons why some people say they do not believe in God. Let us take the argument that God cannot exist because a just and loving God would not allow innocent people to suffer. Take for instance a child having a brain tumor, or a teenager getting killed in an auto accident, or someone dying of AIDS. There is untold human suffering by those directly and indirectly involved: the mother who grieves her dying baby, the parents who get a phone call in the middle of the night telling them to go to the hospital, and the loved ones who see their family member suffer from AIDS. All are testimonies to human suffering. I cannot deny the reality of suffering.

However, let’s take the argument being set forth & say, *“OK, you are right!”* Suffering proves that a just God cannot exist. Does that make you feel better? Does it make suffering diminish? Will babies no longer die? Will auto accidents end? Will people quit contracting AIDS? Will no one get cancer? Obviously the answer to these questions is NO. So, what good does it do to take this line of argument? Denying the existence of God may make us feel justified in not serving Him, but it does not stop human suffering. If anything it increases it. It means that all of the suffering of this life is without reason or purpose. There is nothing to comfort the dying or the living. It simply means that we live in a world where people die and once their life ends it is all over for them.

Denying the existence of God because of suffering may make us feel better or show our anger, but it side steps the question, *“Why do we suffer?”* Let us just leave God out of the picture for a few minutes and look at this thing from a purely human point of view. We often suffer because of our own decisions. A few weeks ago there was flooding in New Jersey. Recently we have had flooding here and currently people in Memphis, Tennessee are having flooding. Usually numerous drownings occur in times like these. While at home one day, the national news network cut to a drastic situation. A woman was clinging to a tree in the middle of raging water. Rescue workers were trying to get a boat out there to save her and the announcers were describing the situation. At that time a person with the authorities in New Jersey was on the phone. His first words pointed out that people were warned to stay off the rivers and creeks. This lady decided to ignore the warnings and went kayaking. She flipped over and was now holding on for dear life.

Eventually she was rescued but what if she had died? Her family would have grieved but who would have been responsible? Would it have been right for the parents to say that a just and loving God would not have allowed their daughter to die so they refused to believe He exists? What about personal responsibility or accountability? According to the Bible, God made Adam and Eve good, **Genesis 1:31**. It was only after they sinned that death and suffering entered the world. ***“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned”*** (**Romans 5:12**). Both spiritual and physical death entered the world when Adam and Eve sinned against God. If we’re looking for someone to blame, it would seem to make more sense to blame Adam & Eve than God.

Let’s take the situation where a person has a medical condition that results in their death. Can we say that every case of cancer, heart attack, stroke, etc. proves that God does not exist? What about all the healthy people without any of those conditions? Healthy people do not prove the existence of God. Sick people do not prove He does not exist. Our bodies are fragile. They get sick, contract diseases, and they even deteriorate with age. But such does not prove the non-existence of God; it only proves that we don’t like the nature of our physical bodies. I don’t like it when I get sick, or my feet hurt me, or a loved one dies. But it proves nothing. How about people dying because of their own decisions? The immoral person who contracts AIDS or the drunkard who gets killed in an accident, made their own choices. God did not tell us to have sex with anyone or everyone we can. He did not tell us to party it up and get drunk. The Bible tells us to abstain from sexual immorality. ***“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality”*** (**1 Thessalonians 4:3**). The Bible tells us to not even look at wine, **Proverbs 23:31**. Our bad choices do not prove the non-existence of God. It only proves that some can and do make bad choices.

The bottom line is that death does not prove the non-existence of God. It only proves the temporary nature of our lives. It is a false conclusion based on our anger or dislike of human suffering. But suffering has a purpose. It makes us realize that we are frail. Job said, ***“My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle”*** (**Job 7:6**). He did not say that when things were going well, but when he was suffering. Death teaches us the value of time and to number our days, **Psalm 90:12**. Death also teaches us how much we truly need God. As Job continued to say in **Job 7:6**, ***“and are spent without hope.”*** Man without God is in a hopeless condition. Here is the irony of the whole argument of human suffering proving that God does not exist. They are running from the very One who can help them cope with human suffering. God and in particular, Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses because He, Himself suffered in this life. Anger proves nothing. Suffering proves something but not the non-existence of God.