Why do people suffer hardship, war and violence in this world?

Why do people die?

Why is there disease and famine?

If God is good how do you explain natural disasters?

These are questions we all have at one time or another, especially when we or our loved ones are suffering. And they all have the same answer: the fall, sin come into the world through human disobedience and it has corrupted all of God’s good creation.

_Creation_  
The universe was made good. God deliberately made each part of creation to function perfectly. God created all things from nothing, using only His powerful Word. Just think about that for a second, God made everything we see and know about from nothing. He spoke everything into existence: all creatures, oxygen, atoms, gravity, soil and rabbits. God created in all. In fact, in the Bible the Hebrew word for create is only ever used of God. Humans can only utilise and re-shape what God has already created, we cannot make something new.

On the final day of creation God saw everything He had made, and behold, it was very good (Gen. 1:31). Here we see that God’s character is reflected in His creation. The Bible tells us that God is good and so creation is good. It works well. The earth is placed a perfect distance from the sun: any closer and we would fry, any further away and we would be permanently frozen.

The crowning glory of God’s good creation was man. God poured His goodness into all of creation, but in making humans God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Gen. 1:27).

As the only creatures made in God’s image, humans were given the role of ruling over creation on God’s behalf. We are to care for creation and rule
over it wisely. We see this in Genesis 2 where we are told, The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it (Gen. 2:15). This work is not hard labour or punishment. It is a gift from God to Adam and Eve.

Here we have a picture of an earthly paradise. A universe and a planet created by God to function in an orderly manner, over which the first humans were given the vocation of being caretakers and guardians of the earth. We also see that God's grace is not something new. He gave Adam and Eve the incredible blessings of a sin free world in which to live, a place where everything worked in perfect harmony.

After creating human life God then issued Adam and Eve with the first command of prohibition. Every command of God so far had been about creating the universe and giving life: “Let there be light”, “Let the earth bring forth” (Gen. 1:3, 24). But now we hear the first command that says “do not do this.” God told Adam, “You may surely eat of every tree in the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:16, 17).

This means God wanted Adam and Eve to trust Him at His Word. From the very beginning of the world not only do we see the grace of God granting blessings to humans, but the necessity of faith in God and His Word to receive His blessings and remain in His grace.

Adam and Eve were to look around and see God’s goodness, and trust that this law that God had given was also for their good. From the same mouth that spoke life into the creation come words of life in the form of ban. If they ignored God’s Word and did their own thing they would cut themselves off from the God of life and goodness. The first humans lived by faith in God’s goodness just as we do.

Temptation

For a time creation functioned as God had intended. Adam and Eve were righteous. They were made sinless and as husband and wife they lived in perfect harmony with each other and with their Creator and God. They knew true peace and love, and had no fears or worries. Adam and Eve lived in the garden and enjoyed its bounty. According to God’s command they worked the soil and kept the garden. The word ‘keep’ means to guard and protect. But what were they supposed to guard Eden against, and how were they to protect it?
life line to God. He speaks words of life to you. He speaks the Law to keep you from sin and drive you away from sinful behaviour. He speaks the Gospel to forgive you and make you new again.

And when you do fail, don't just receive words of forgiveness then stop striving to live as God's child because you know you will fail again. Go and do your best to love and serve and make the most of the opportunities God provides to share His love with others. Let the Gospel flow from you. Let the Spirit guide you to be a blessing.

Above all hold fast to God's Word and trust in the Saviour Jesus. He has saved you to worship God and love all others. Amen.

Let's pray. O God, You see that of ourselves we have no strength. By Your mighty power defend us from all adversities that may happen to the body and from all evil thought that may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The peace of God that passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

To God alone be the glory

The only enemy of man was the 'adversary', the 'accuser', which is the meaning of Satan's name. Adam and Eve were to protect the garden and themselves with the life giving and life preserving Word of God.

Satan's first attack against God's people is always an attack on the Word of God. He began his assault by tempting Eve to doubt God's Word. Listen to how crafty he is. "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" (Gen. 3:1). Satan misquotes God's Word to make it sound harsh and restrictive. He created confusion and drew Eve into what appears to be a sincere theological discussion.

We see confusion in Eve's reply. "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die'" (Gen. 3:2, 3). Instead of replying with just the words God spoke, Eve adds to them. Perhaps from confusion, or maybe she thought God's Word was not enough on its own and needed reinforcing. Either way, Satan now had Eve on the run, because she was not relying on God's Word alone to repel the devil and resist his temptations. Eve was trusting in her own words, giving them the same standing as God's Word.

Having put doubt and suspicion in Eve's mind, Satan moved to reject God's Word altogether. "You will not surely die", he said. Notice that Satan does not attack Eve. He leaves her feeling confident in herself. Instead He attacks God and His Word, calling God a liar, saying they will not die for eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. "For God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Satan accused God of withholding good things from humans, as if they were incomplete and defective and could only find fulfilment in eating the forbidden fruit. The devil attacked Adam and Eve's faith by sowing the seeds of doubt in God and His Word. For the first time in the history of the world, humans looked at God with eyes of suspicion.

The real power of Satan's temptations are the twin lies of 1) God is withholding good from us, and, 2) we can be like God deciding for ourselves what it good and evil. Our first parents saw in Satan's false promised the opportunity to make the rules of life for themselves. Even though God had only given them one law, forbidding them from eating from a certain tree, Adam and Eve wanted to make their own rules.
The Fall

Instead of fleeing from the lies of Satan and trusting God’s Word or going to Him, Eve makes her own assessment of the forbidden fruit. She does not evaluate the fruit on the basis of God’s Word, it can’t be trusted, but on her own values: it was wholesome, it looked beautiful and it was helpful in gaining wisdom to make her a complete human.

Good was no longer sought in from God and what He gives and says is good, but by what humans say is good and right. In effect, Eve was already deciding for herself what was good and evil, even before she ate the forbidden fruit.

Eve took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened (Gen 3:6, 7). And thus, sin came into the world through on man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned (Rom. 5:12).

That is why we have war and violence, suffering and hardship, famine, disease and disaster in this world. We couldn’t be happy with God being God and we living as His children. Faith that God is doing a brilliant job of managing creation would not do. No, we had to decide what is good and evil for ourselves, and the result of our rebellion is that sin infects all of creation.

But don’t point the finger of blame at Adam and Eve. All humanity is guilty of throwing God’s Word in the trash and making our own rules. Sure, the devil tempts and tries day and night to lead us away from God and His strong Word, but how often do we willingly walk in the devil’s ways.

We listen to his whispers, “Did God really say...” “Does God really mean that?” We have the Spirit of God living is us, but we listen to Satan’s lies. Each of us owns many Bibles, but do we hold fast to the holy Scriptures? We have the very words of God’s Son, but prefer to follow the words of this world, a world in which Satan is still directing people to reject God and His Word.

The devil drives the world to take what is good and turn it into evil or taint good with evil. Sex and money is for self pleasure, unwanted babies for killing, while chastity and humility are ridiculed. The world takes evil and says it is good. Swearing and blasphemy show healthy self-expression, euthanasia is logical and caring, homosexuality is right and good. This is what happens when humans decide what is good and evil. The inevitable conclusion to humans making the rules is more evil and wickedness in the world. The logical response of God should be to pour out His wrath on us all and throw us into the fires of hell to suffer for all eternity for our sin and unbelief.

Who will save us? Who will rescue us from ourselves? Who can take away our guilt and shame? To see the Saviour we need only listen to the good God who did not seek vengeance when our first parents rebelled, but continued to bless them and call them back to Himself.

God’s goodness can be seen in that Adam and Eve did not die when they ate of the forbidden fruit, even though God said they would. God is merciful. He spared their lives and promised them a descendant to overcome the serpent. God didn’t kill them, He allowed them to have children and graciously gave Adam and Eve time to repent, time to know His love again.

Closing words

Our hope is in our gracious and loving God. He has not abandoned us to suffer the consequences of our sins. God has placed a limit on evil’s power, otherwise we would be consumed. More than that, God Himself has come down in the person of His Son to redeem us. He has taken on human flesh in order to recue all humanity.

Christ lived according to all God’s Laws and kept them perfectly because we cannot. As the spotless Lamb of God, Christ willingly submitted to the Father’s will and took the sins of the world on Himself. Although He was innocent He suffered for you. He took away your sins by the cross.

Christ suffered for you, to pay the price of your sin. Christ died for you, to set you free from the guilt of sin. Christ bled to wash you clean and give you hope. He hung on the cross to show you how much God loves you and wants you to know His love.

Look at the wounds of Christ and see in them your salvation. Look at the nails that tore through His body; they were for you, but He stood in as your substitute. Christ suffered and died and was raised again: forgiveness is given you through the Word of God in the Gospel. Salvation is yours through the Word of God poured over you in Holy Baptism. Eternal life is yours in the Word of God fed to you in Holy Communion.

Trust the Word of God above all other words. Hold into His Word no matter what the world, or the devil or our old Adam says to you. The Word is your