

Christianity Clarified Volume 22

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[0 : 00] What is Christianity really all about? The issue remains very confusing to a large segment of our society.

At times, it even extends to many who consider themselves Christian. Here, in an ongoing effort to try and dispel some of the confusion, is Marv Wiseman, with another session of Christianity Clarified.

The Universality of Pain A very insightful quote in connection with seeking answers to our particular whys of our pain is taken from the prolific pen of C.S. Lewis.

In his book, which we heartily recommend, entitled *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis, an Oxford Don and former atheist, gave us this wisdom, said he, God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains.

It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world. Let me repeat that, because it is so insightful, we will have occasion to refer to it in the following segments of this present volume of Christianity Clarified.

[1 : 18] Here it is. Lewis uses the word pain in the plural as pains, no doubt due to the multiple kinds of pain we all can experience.

Pain does appear in all shapes and sizes, and it is amazing how much pain of different kinds can be packed into the life of one human being. Multiply that potential times our humanity existing in the billions, and you have an inexpressible conclusion.

Worldwide, every being is subject to emotional and physical pain produced by guilt, fear, and other agitators, and who among us, living any length of time at all, is not familiar, sometimes profoundly so, with physical pain that racks our bodies in its several parts.

From the skin knee of the two-year-old's owie or boo-boo, to the downright unrelenting pain of an incurable condition that can be so excruciating, it defies description.

Pain covers the gamut of humanity. And anyone who so far seems to have escaped, hasn't. They just haven't lived long enough.

[2 : 50] Pain is pain, and it's an equal opportunity visitor. But why is this the case? In the best of all possible worlds, there would be no pain.

But this is not such a world, is it? And this reality should be our first clue. Why is this world the world that it is?

And if it is a world God made, couldn't he have done a better job, beginning with the things that cause people so much pain? Here, precisely here, is where any treatment of the subject of pain must begin.

If we avoid, or worse, if we deny this aspect of the original cause of pain, we can then dismiss the possibility of getting any answers because there just aren't any.

So, all explorations for the causes of pain must begin here. We will. Upcoming.

[4 : 01] Why this world is as it is. Part 1. Our familiarity with this present world grows day by day just by living in it.

But how did it get this way? And why? Pain of all kinds, to all degrees, is all around us, and sometimes in us. No one is denying that this is so, but why is it so?

Why does it have to be so? Must we content ourselves by living in a pain-ridden world? Must we constantly be on the lookout for more effective ways of eliminating our pain, or at least controlling it?

How, when, and why did this terrible thing called pain ever make itself such a permanent kind of a visitor to humanity? And to find an answer, we must go back to origins, ultimate origins.

And the possibilities as we see them are only two, so you can take your pick. First, there is the explanation of the evolutionist who insists that pain is merely the result of the choices made by man

and beast in their struggle for survival, and it is the fittest among us that prevail.

[5 : 12] The poet had it right when he said, Nature is red in tooth and claw. There is a food chain, and there are predators that consume one another. They further tell us, There is no intelligence behind our world because there is no God and no need for God.

After all, Stephen Hawking, dubbed by many as the world's greatest living physicist, has concluded, There is no need for a supreme being because gravity made it possible for the universe to create itself.

Hence, the world is as it is simply because this is the natural way things have worked out. It is a predatory world. Oft times cruel and brutal acts are performed by man and beast upon man and beast.

It is just the way nature is. All is random, completely unplanned, and unintentional, with no central intelligence behind it or in control of it. Pain is just because it is a result of the ongoing struggle of the species, including man.

So, don't look to the confirmed evolutionist for an answer to pain. He will clearly tell you, There is no creator that is intelligent, nor is there such a thing as intentionality, purpose, meaning, or destiny.

[6 : 32] All is disorganized randomness and pain or the lack thereof is simply the luck of the draw and nothing else. This is the first possible answer of the only two that are available.

And the evolutionist answer is, there is no answer that has intention or purpose or destiny or meaning in mind, because there is no mind behind it at all, only mindlessness, randomness, and meaninglessness.

Bottom line, there are no answers, only random events. The world is as it is just because this is the way it is.

Look for no other answers because there aren't any. But for those of us not satisfied with that, we opt for the other answer to pain.

There is one, and it is coming. Why This World Is As It Is Part 2 As we have just noted in our previous segment, advocates of the no-need-for-God evolutionary model of origins offer no answers for the existence of human pain.

[7 : 55] Pain and misery are simply because it's the natural way things have worked out. With no intelligence or intention behind the origin of the world, there can't be an answer of why pain exists.

It just does. It would be like looking for the purpose behind an accident. There is none. Since, say they, all the universe is the product of haphazard random forces that just happen to come together as they did.

Humans are simply a biological accident, so how can there be an answer or rationale to human pain and suffering? We would eagerly agree with them if there were no God behind it all.

But we don't agree because there is. And because there is, there are answers regarding the whys of human pain and misery. Christianity Clarified embraces the biblical model which not only provides answers to human pain and suffering, but with answers in other areas as well.

We do not believe it to be a mere coincidence that the biblical description so fully fits the way the world actually is. The Genesis record tells us what our Creator called this world and all living things upon it, including man, just after He finished creating it.

[9 : 16] He called it all very good. You may consult Genesis 1.31. It was very good because everything God created comported with the will and wishes of the Creator.

The epitome of His creation was Adam and Eve, first human beings and the only biological life forms made in the likeness and image of the Creator. Additionally, they were the only life forms to be recipients of volition.

This meant that only humans were endowed with the will and the ability to make moral choices. God had two options.

Either create beings with no ability to make independent decisions, thus confining them to a state of automatic obedience to God, or He could endow these beings with the will of their own and the potential for making choices even if apart from God's will.

The Bible makes it quite clear that God chose the latter. Man, from his beginning, was made by God to be a free moral agent possessing the ability to obey or disobey the very one who gave him existence.

[10 : 31] With this capacity, the first two humans, Adam and Eve, original parents of all humanity, exercised their wills against the will and prohibition of their Creator.

It's told in Genesis 3 and represents the very first act of simple disobedience to what seemed to be a very simple prohibition, but it had incalculable consequences we continue to live with to this present day.

So this, as we have said, resulted in the world being a fallen world. Few realize or understand the implications we will try to explain further upcoming.

Why this world is as it is, part 3.

The Bible makes it clear that human origins began in Genesis, and it is equally clear Adam and Eve, described as real people, were given dominion or authority over everything else God had created.

[11 : 34] It was a kind of federal headship delegated to them. What is not clear is how their willful disobedience to God's simple prohibition resulted in a radical change of their very nature and being, but it did.

There is no indication that, after their partaking of the forbidden fruit, whatever it was, that they then looked different, but they were different. Something happened on the inside of them, their psyche, that altered their personhood.

They took unto themselves a different kind of nature their Creator had not put there. In their rejection of God's will, they now had no will remaining but their own.

God's will is now out of their picture. Adam and Eve became self-willed. As creatures, they now made themselves the center and focus of everything as opposed to God being their center.

This new self-centered compulsion Adam had now taken upon himself is referred to as his fallen or sinful nature. While God never created them this way, He did create them with this potential.

[12 : 53] So, while God cannot be charged with having created this present world with all its pain and misery, He certainly did create a world with the potential for becoming what it is.

Next question, of course, is, why did He create the world with that potential? This returns us to the previous issue of human volition and the power to make choices, remember?

Had God not created us volitional beings, that is, free moral agents with powers of choice, we would be virtual robots, mere automatons who are programmed in such a way that we could do no wrong. Our programming, installed by the Creator, could only do what was programmed to do. Would you really want to be one of those? How different from a machine would that be?

Not very. But as volitional beings with wills to exercise, we may engage them in such a way that produces amazing love, joy, ecstasy, peacefulness, beauty, and enjoyment indescribable.

[14 : 04] But also with that will, we in our self-centeredness can also create assorted brutality, an ugliness of behavior and ill-treatment of other human beings that defies description.

True volition demands we acknowledge the dark side and not just the good side. This dark side is a very painful part of the human condition passed on from generation to generation and none have escaped it.

We struggle with it today in our own environment and throughout the world in daily atrocities. It is not what God created, but what our disobedience to God created.

More upcoming. Why This World Is As It Is Part 4 God warned Adam and Eve their disobedience would result in their death.

Yet they chose to exercise the will they had been given and find out for themselves just what that death would entail. The allure and enticement they experienced about the knowing of good and evil outweighed the threat of death, whatever that meant that God had warned them about.

[15 : 23] After all, they apparently knew only good, but if they ate of the fruit, they would then know good and evil. That does sound like a more balanced life, doesn't it?

In addition, Satan reminded them they would be as God. Wouldn't that be something? Satan also stated this was the reason God didn't want them to eat of that tree, because then he would have competition with them also being a God.

And Satan, being the father of lies, was working his plan flawlessly, and they bought the whole thing. There remains so much about this initial disobedience we do not understand.

We understand better the consequences following in its wake, and they are gigantic, casting the entire creation and all the progeny of our first parents into pain, suffering, and eventually death.

This became not the world God created, but the world man's sin and disobedience created.

Admittedly, the entire account is nothing short of bizarre, but truth has always been stranger than fiction.

[16 : 45] Besides, who can deny that this is precisely the description of the world we see all around us. Individuals and nations, all vying for dominance in their self-centered ambitions, inherited from our first parents as surely as we inherited arms and legs and hair and eye color.

It all fits the picture and runs the gamut from the supremest of pleasures and beauty to the hot cauldrons of pain, suffering, and death.

this is how we got the world we have. But we still have this nagging question about whys, remember? We already noted that God gave humans volition so they could oppose his will if they chose, as opposed to making them without a volition or the capacity to disobey.

It ought to be noted that compliance, when there is no ability to be non-compliant, is worthless. As is the kind of love that loves only because it has to, as opposed to loving by one's own choice. That's also worthless. We would not want that kind of love and neither does God. So, while we humans have the capacity to render unto one another deep love and affection, we also possess a capacity for extreme hatred and brutality, like we see at home and abroad.

[18 : 13] This is the true source of our pain and our pleasure. It's all wrapped up in our volition and how we treat one another. Why this world is as it is, part five.

The subject of the fallenness of the world is the critical key to understanding why the world is as it is. We know how physical genetics have transferred characteristics of each of our parents to us via dominant or recessive genes and such, and these account for eye and hair color, body features such as short or tall stature, and so on.

And with modern science, these genetic physical items are observable in our laboratories. What we do not know is how, or if, the non-physical part of our makeup is transferred from one generation to the next.

In their disobedience to God, it appears that the foreign nature of fallenness and self-centeredness taken on by Adam and Eve was transferred to their offspring also.

But precisely how, we do not know. We have no idea how an intangible can be transmitted from one generation to another. At any rate, Adam and Eve's new self-centeredness that was now part of their fallenness was transmitted, however it was, to Cain and Abel and onward.

[19 : 51] Other than through environmental influence, how can intangibles or non-physicals be transmitted from anyone to anyone?

We admit we are perplexed as to how parental, moral fallenness is transmitted from generation to generation, but we cannot escape the reality that every new generation that comes along proves they are endowed with it, person by person.

Besides, just because we cannot submit such a transmission to the scientific laboratory for examination, like we can with the physical, does not negate the reality of its happening.

Be reminded, of course, these matters all belong to the realm of the spirit, which has never been available for empirical analysis in man's laboratories. This new and negative disposition called the sin nature that Adam and Eve had taken upon themselves in their disobedience was not at all something God had created as part of them.

Rather, it was something irreversible they had become in addition to the innocence with which God originally made them. Now, they were no longer innocent.

[21 : 10] Even as Satan told them, they now know not only good, but good and evil. And the evil was their undoing, and provided the consequences of death, just as God told them it would.

But, of course, before they died, they passed on to their offspring not only what they were physically, but what they had become morally and spiritually. They were now rebels.

And this nature of self-centered rebellion in all of us is a direct product and perpetuation of these two original parents.

Despite all of this, which God had to have foreknown, he decided to create anyway. And why he did is still upcoming. The God created anything We cannot say God didn't see it coming.

After all, part of God's job description is an attribute called omniscience, and the word simply means all-knowing. To be all-knowing, the past, present, and future all have to be included.

[22 : 28] The Bible makes it quite clear that nothing escapes the deity, nothing surprises the deity, and nothing confounds the deity.

Such, of course, is utterly incomprehensible to us mere mortals, but omniscience is standard operating procedure to the God and creator of the universe.

So the question is often asked, knowing all the negatives, pain, and sorrow that is to come as a result of what he created, not only with man, but with rebellious and fallen angels as well, why did God choose to create anything?

In his mind, he likely had multiple answers to that question, but we are aware of only one that he has given us, and it's found in Revelation chapter 4. It's curious that God doesn't provide this answer when the beginning began, in Genesis, but he reserved it until near the big wrap-up close to the end.

And the answer as to why there is anything is provided by a group of twenty-four beings, yet unidentified, but simply referred to as twenty-four elders.

[23 : 37] And in an act of corporate worship, these beings fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

That's it. Revelation 4, verses 10 and 11. The text merely says, God created all things simply because it pleased him to do so.

He wanted to do it, so he did it. Did God have the right to do so? Or the question may be asked, was God right in doing so?

But with God himself being the standard, we cannot say God does what is right. We must say what God does is right.

And that's different. It's a concept experienced in Romans 9. Doesn't the potter have power over the clay?

[24 : 52] Can the thing made say to him that made it, why have you made me thus? An attempt to find fault with God is like a lump of clay complaining to the maker at the potter's wheel for making it into the kind of vessel it is.

The absurdity of that is equal to mere man criticizing or finding fault with the Almighty. And to do so is what the scripture calls charging God foolishly, precisely what Job refused to do despite all the adversity that had befallen him.

It's in Job chapter 1. God has the perfect right to do as he will with all he has created. None can stay his hand or has the right to do so.

God is real and so is evil. The problem of evil has plagued philosophers and theologians for millennia.

How can we possibly account for the coexistence of an all-powerful loving God and the undeniable existence of evil? If God is all-powerful but will not put an end to evil, he must not be loving.

[26 : 08] Or if he is loving yet does not put an end to evil, he must not be all-powerful. It is safe to say there is probably no greater reason given among men for the rejection of a good God than this existence of evil, pain, atrocity, disease, hurricanes, and earthquakes.

History is replete with sordid examples of genocide like that of World War II carried out against the Jewish people. For many of those Jews, the idea of a loving God, or any God at all, was abandoned.

Atheism was the only thing that made any sense to them. How could the God of the Bible possibly stand by and do nothing to prevent these unspeakably cruel atrocities?

Many would conclude, surely there cannot be a God, and even if there is, I want nothing whatever to do with him. This was, and is, a view held yet today among many in the Jewish population.

So how can it be in our ultra-enlightened and technologically advanced 21st century? There are waves of brutal executions sweeping across entire nations, murdering, beheading, raping fellow human beings.

[27 : 29] And, where is God? Doesn't he see what's going on? Doesn't he care? Why doesn't he stop it? Once again, we see no possibility of ever explaining this other than returning to the two-fold reality of volition being given to created beings and the resulting moral corruption of all earth dwellers.

Some seek to dominate and control others, and are willing to utilize whatever brutality they deem necessary to achieve that. They have existed in every generation, some with greater numbers and atrocities than others.

So, should God simply override the volition he has given these evil ones and not permit them to exercise their will freely? But would that not negate his very purpose in granting humans a will to

use or misuse?

Should God monitor human behavior towards other humans and intervene when it becomes too brutal? Where would that line be? How brutal could God allow men to be and still get away with it? What treatment would bring the interdiction and wrath of God to stop the perpetrators? The problem with people who want God to step in and prevent what they think he should is that they appear to want it both ways.

[28 : 58] They insist on the freedom of their will to do as they please, but expect God to prevent others from doing as they please. God is not playing games with imparting volition, and only on rare occasions does he override it.

Upcoming. When and Why God Intervenes There are times when we all wonder about God withholding his intervention in regard to man's commission of atrocities.

The sheer brutality of humans toward fellow humans defies description. The fact is, mankind, through the representation of our first parents, to whom we are all corporately related, insisted on having their own way as opposed to God's way.

This self-centeredness is an obvious result of the fall in Genesis 3. In essence, God told them, all right, you may exercise your volition and have your will rather than mine, but it's going to bring a lot of pain and conflict, including death.

And it is so. Thus it is with man and his free will, a will that enables him to love his fellow man or brutalize him.

[30 : 25] For God to grant one possibility but not the other, would make human volition impossible, even for God. The Bible records many occasions when God directly intervened on behalf of man.

Israel in the Old Testament was accustomed to supernatural intervention. God accommodated them in numerous situations, beginning with their miraculous delivery out of Egypt.

But these were all specifically for the chosen people in a unique covenant relationship with God. In the New Testament, although still functioning under the Mosaic law, Jesus authenticated his claim of Messiahship by the numerous miracles he performed.

They included not only raising others and himself from the dead, but also by exercising power over nature itself, instilling the storm and the waves.

The apostles had also received similar powers delegated to them by Christ. Yet with the temporary setting aside of Israel in judicial blindness, as revealed in Romans 9-11, that manifestation of miracles dramatically subsided.

[31 : 41] And this then became the church age, not characterized by miracles as with the Jew who had been taught to seek after signs, but with the church, which is now called to walk by faith and not by sight.

This, in large part, explains the absence of miracles today. While it's true, God can still perform miracles anywhere, anytime he chooses.

He does so only rarely, whereas in Israel's history, the miraculous was standard operating procedure. These present days are also referred to as the times of the Gentiles, not the Jews.

The Gentiles have free reign upon the earth, and they make the best of it and the worst of it.

Understanding this aids in explaining God's lack of intervention in world events today.

He gave mankind volition and allows him to use it as he will, for good or ill. Man's volition is real, sometimes positive and constructive, sometimes brutally destructive.

[32 : 57] Pain gets our attention. In our first segment of this 22nd volume of Christianity Clarified, we repeated an insightful quote from prolific writer and apologist C.S.

Lewis. He said, God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains.

It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world. We interpret Lewis's quote to mean God is intent on getting our attention.

The world and those dwelling in it tend to be oblivious, deaf if you will, to what we ought to be hearing from God. Just as we cannot speak in a whisper to someone who has a serious hearing problem, we must raise our voice well above a whisper, and that may not even suffice.

What then must we do? We shout. We speak so loudly it may gain the attention of others for whom we did not intend to hear. But the shout is the only way those hard of hearing can hear us.

[34 : 08] The way God shouts is in or through our pain. Pain can get our attention when nothing else gets through to us.

You may have heard the story of the farmer who was selling a mule to another farmer nearby. And when asked whether the mule would work or was stubborn and wouldn't move, he was told he only had to command the mule in a nice way to move, and he would.

Well, could you show me how you do that? Asked the prospective buyer. Certainly, he said. He then picked up a two-by-four board he had gotten out of the wagon, walked up to the mule, and whacked him hard right between the eyes.

The buyer was shocked and said, But you told me you only had to command the mule in a nice way to move, and he would. Why did you hit that poor thing with the two-by-four?

Well, first, said the seller, before you order him in a nice way to move, you have to get his attention. Well, it would appear that C.S.

[35 : 15] Lewis is suggesting that pain can be God's two-by-four. He uses pain to get our attention. Pain, especially if it is severe and unrelenting, causes us to focus on it at the exclusion of all else.

We may even go to bed with it, try to sleep in it, and then arise with it to face it all throughout the day, only to repeat the process day in and day out.

For sure, pain reveals our vulnerability, our weakness, our dependence upon various medications prescribed to lessen or block the pain.

Pills are prescribed both for physical pain and emotional pain, such as depression, anxiety, and other maladies. Sometimes they help greatly, but have on occasion even been known to actually worsen one's condition.

So be reminded that pain of whatever sort is systemic to the human race. Any who have not experienced physical or emotional pain of some kind, whether mild or intense, simply has not lived long enough.

[36 : 23] Pain, if not a present reality, will be a future visitor. The Two Sources of Our Pain Broadly speaking, we can categorize pain as coming from two different sources.

The first and easiest to recognize is the physical. The conditions and ailments capable of being experienced in the human body are almost limitless. So many organs and body parts are capable of producing immense pain, sometimes so excruciating it defies description, and sometimes so unrelenting it has driven some to suicide, believing there is no other way to escape it.

Efforts to conquer the pain, or at least reduce it, has produced untold numbers of medical addicts, many of whom begin their addiction by using legitimately prescribed medications by a physician, and thus developing a dependency that dominates their life.

Then there is the emotional pain that is not nearly as easy to diagnose, but is every bit as real as the physical pain from cancer or any other serious physical malady.

Emotional pain is, of course, in our human psyche or spirit, where surgery or medication can't reach. Many try to subdue emotional pain with alcohol, legal or illegal drugs, but to no avail.

[38 : 00] The most they ever achieve is a brief respite of numbness, and when it wears off, they are back where they started from, perhaps even more despondent. This is a truly brutal and vicious cycle, and there are untold millions caught up in it.

The sources of emotional pain are nearly too numerous to mention, but we will speak only of those we intend to address on future segments of Christianity clarified.

And they include, but certainly are not limited to, emotional pain caused by various kinds of losses. Maybe the loss of a spouse, a parent, or a child.

A loss resulting from divorce, infidelity in marriage. The loss of trust. An economic loss affecting financial ability. A loss of health and physical mobility.

Loss of a child through undergoing an abortion. A loss of virginity due to irresponsible behavior and subsequent guilt and remorse.

[39 : 02] A loss via forcible rape or sexual molestation. Sometimes by a trusted authority figure, such as a parent, step-parent, priest, preacher, or teacher, constituting a severe kind of betrayal.

Any of these are capable of inducing emotional and psychological pain that is so profound and crippling, it keeps them from living a normal life.

They are perpetually devastated by their loss and the pain never seems to let up. Unlike physical pain, the pain from emotional injury leaves scars that are not visible, but certainly just as real.

And as there are two sources of our pain, physical and emotional, so also there are two responses to our pain.

And there are only two. We will see, upcoming, you can determine if you belong to one or the other. The Two Responses to Pain There are but two responses available when facing and dealing with pain that comes into one's life.

[40 : 23] Whether the pain is physical or emotional, there are still but two possible ways of addressing it. One is from a perspective or mindset that is Christian, and the other from the perspective or mindset that is non-Christian.

And there is no other because one is one or the other. So there is no in-between. When the Christian faces pain, he has spiritual resources at his disposal that give him an entirely different attitudinal approach to the subject of pain.

The Christian potentially has an enormous advantage in dealing with his pain that the world knows not of. And speaking of the world, this is the sphere from which the non-Christian must operate, because it's the only one available to him, simply because it's all he knows.

Devoid of all the Bible teaches about life, its pain and its pleasures, and particularly its pain, the non-Christian is largely confined to confusion and often complaining.

And they are confused because they know little or nothing of the fallen world spoken of earlier. And they are understandably complaining because, even though they are not a Christian, they sometimes have a grudge against God or others for not having prevented the circumstances that result in their pain.

[41 : 43] Our hearts go out to them because they have no idea about what they do not know, that were they to know it, it would go a long way to alleviating their pain, or perhaps, through God's forgiveness, removing it altogether.

And this was covered somewhat in Christianity Clarified, Volume 13. Yet, please be reminded, as we just said, the Christian potentially has an enormous advantage in dealing with pain because of the spiritual resources available to him from God's Word.

But we emphasize potential, because these resources are not automatic for the Christian, only potential. They are there, and they are available to every child of God who may press these biblical principles into service and be greatly enlightened and strengthened by them.

However, if one who is a Christian is spiritually immature, or walking in the flesh as opposed to the Spirit, living in disobedience to the Lord, then the way he fares practically and attitudinally is a little different from the non-Christian.

And this is particularly sad because these, in effect, are actually squandering a portion of the spiritual assets Christ died to provide for them.

[43 : 05] The Bible contains multiple situations relating to the pains of life and the right approach to them, as we shall see. But to be ignorant of them or refuse to investigate them to see how God wants to use them in your own situation with pain is unnecessarily tragic.

Perspective does change everything, even sometimes to making the otherwise unbearable bearable. It comes only from what we know, because God has been pleased to reveal it, and not because we're smart enough to figure it out.

Pain is a hurtful thing Because pain, whether physical or emotional, is a kind of bell-ringer, it has a way of not only getting our attention, but sometimes keeping us focused on it, perhaps even to the point of being dominated or consumed by it.

Persistent pain, especially if severe, grabs our attention and won't let go. All we can think about is identifying its source or cause, eliminating it, or at least reducing it to a level, if possible, that is tolerable.

Is there anything that so convinces us of our weakness and inability as pain? Nothing we know of. Physical torture is the device of causing the tortured to experience so much pain, he will comply with everything required of him.

[44 : 43] It is a very brutal device that works with predictable effectiveness. One experiencing this kind of treatment, no matter how physically fit or strong they may be normally, is reduced to a mass of quivering jelly, ready to agree to whatever the torturers demand, all because they have stimulated millions of nerve endings in the body of the victim.

This is weakness. This is utter helplessness, and it does cause one's focus to be fixed. And the focus is on stop the pain.

Admittedly, this is an extreme form of gaining one's attention, but it does serve to make our point that pain is all about gaining our attention. Pain reveals our weakness like nothing else.

In pain, we are not thinking of our self-sufficiency, but of the sufficiency of someone or something outside of ourselves. Have you ever had an excruciating toothache?

How can such a tiny thing as a tooth produce so much misery? How strong and capable now do you feel in the midst of that abscessed molar?

[45 : 58] Not very. Where is the nearest dentist? Speaking of tiny things producing a disproportionate amount of pain, reflect upon the agony of a kidney stone, not much larger than a grain of sand, and it will bring you to an end of your self-sufficiency pronto.

Pain of an emotional kind can be even worse, but in a different way. This pain you cannot pass like you would a kidney stone. Opiates may dull the pain, but they can't remove it, and the most skilled surgeon can't reach it with his scalpel.

The reason pain, whether physical or emotional, always gets our attention is because it hurts. We want to stop it. It hurts a lot.

Our pain is asking us to address it because our tissue, bones, nerves, or psyche is in distress, and it notifies us with this thing called pain.

And while we nearly always think of pain in a negative sense, this is not always the case. There are genuine positive aspects pain may serve in a very helpful way.

[47 : 13] Is pain actually something we sometimes should be thankful for? Upcoming. Pain is a helpful thing.

Ordinarily, no one thinks of pain as a positive simply because it hurts, and no one in their right mind is going to volunteer for that. Yet, this negative thing we think of as hurtful may be extremely helpful because pain is the body's diagnostic tool that all physicians rely on to help them ferret out a greater problem.

Chest pains, for instance, may even be an ultimate lifesaver. Medical tests may reveal severe artery blockages that, when addressed by the cardiologist or surgeon, can be life-saving or at least life-lengthening.

And the rescue all began with pain. Pain is not always the bane. It may, in fact, be a blessing. Pain can be a tip-off or a warning of something far more serious than the pain itself.

And pain can also work this way spiritually as well as physically. In Psalm 119, the psalmist uttered a curious phrase when he explained, It was good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn thy statutes.

[48 : 39] Is he serious? Good to be afflicted? Indeed he is, because it was only because of his affliction that he came to learn God's word.

And that's as much a positive that can come from a usually perceived negative as you can get. Reminding ourselves again of C.S. Lewis' observation that God shouts to us through our pains, it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

We can, in reality, see the benevolence of God at work in the midst of our pain. The pain is God's way of letting us know all is not well, whether it has to do with our physical body or our non-physical spirit or psyche.

And while the physical aspects of pain are more evident, the non-physical can be more elusive and hard to treat. Emotional pain in the memory of our human spirit, that thing we call the conscience that can produce guilt that won't quit.

Sleeplessness, worry, agitation, fear, as in fear of discovery or punishment, can all rob and deprive us of any real enjoyment for life.

[49 : 52] And where these things are present, they are talking to us. They are attention-getters. Are we listening? Emotional pain and guilt are not to be shrugged off.

And we can forget about alcohol or drugs as a solution because they have never worked for anyone and never will because they are not supposed to. It is only imagined and hoped that they will, but their disappointing us can always be counted on.

Let pain do the work God intends it to do. Reveal a need, an issue that needs real resolution, that provides a testimony enabling us to say, It was good that I was afflicted, that I may learn thy statutes.

Included in all that is God's forgiveness for whatever our actions were that produced the unrelenting guilt. And it all came to a head via the kind of pain spoken of by C.S. Lewis.

Might this be something you are struggling with? A Perspective and a Plan God not only has a perspective or viewpoint that is complete, lacking nothing, but He has a plan that perfectly fits His

perspective.

[51 : 18] And yes, it is a plan neither man nor Satan is able to thwart, try as they might. How God is able to plan His work and work His plan, despite the volition He has granted to men and angels, we cannot begin to fathom, but He does.

He does because He must. He must or forfeit the role of Lord of the universe. And God is not about to abdicate His position by surrendering His sovereignty to any or all of His creatures.

It should not surprise us that the plan God has devised is a perfect plan, even as it reflects His own person and nature. And since God's plan is perfect, as is He Himself, what part of that plan can be improved upon?

If God has a plan that is perfect, would that not include the parts of such a plan? How can a thing be made up of parts that are imperfect be perfect?

It cannot. No. Of course, we are not saying that we humans are perfect in ourselves. Far from it. But we are saying that God takes into consideration not only our personhood, but every event, experience of joy or sorrow, deeds of the flesh and of the Spirit, gains and losses of whatever kind, and as a master weaver, fashions them all into a finished product of His choosing.

[52 : 44] How can He possibly do that? We have no idea. It can only come through one who possesses infinite knowledge, wisdom and power, attributes that are the very things that characterize the Almighty.

God knows full well what He is about, and He will bring it all to fruition with or without the cooperation of His creatures. While God's will can be opposed by men and angels, it cannot be thwarted.

Knowing someone of this description and ability is in charge ought to give us peace and tranquility.

And if you think you embrace this concept, there is a question to be asked of you, and here it is. Believing God is sovereign, all-wise and all-powerful, and He has a plan that includes all its parts, and you are one of those parts, would you change that plan if you could?

Think about that. Would you change it if you could? And if so, what could you change a perfect plan to that would then not render it imperfect?

[53 : 59] It's a question of whether we would be willing, if we could, to impose our plan upon the plan of God. And while that would be the height of human arrogance, there are people who would stand in line to do that very thing, fully convinced that they, with their puny perspective, can upstage the sovereign God of the universe, who alone has a full understanding and perspective of all things.

This mindset reveals how vulnerable and desperate we can become with our pain and our whys.

The Complexity of Pain Pain, whether physical or emotional, is a commonality of humans in all times and places.

But what is not common to all is how pain is responded to. And the chief reason our response to pain is so important is that the wrong response can actually make the pain worse, and nobody wants that.

We know there is an undeniable link between our physical body and our non-physical mind. Medical experiments with the placebo effect have conclusively established a connection.

Yet, we still really don't know exactly how the mind and body interact in contributing to our wellness, negatively or positively.

[55 : 28] But that it does is, as we said, undeniable. In other words, the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual way we deal with our physical ailments can actually decrease or increase the condition.

No, we are not talking about the approach taken by those who practice the religion called Christian science, which deals with a denial of physical illness, believing it to be induced by wrong thinking.

Quite the contrary. Physical pain, produced from various bodily ailments, is not a result of wrong thinking. It's the result of something very wrong or dysfunctional about this body of flesh and bone.

While thinking positive about an illness may well have its place, sometimes what is really needed is medication or surgery or both.

Most of us begin dealing with a new physical pain by trying to ignore it. After all, we reason if we ignore it long enough, it will become tired of being ignored and just go away.

[56 : 34] Well, sometimes it may, especially if a relatively minor pain. But if the pain is severe enough and won't subside, then it becomes more than a mere nuisance. And some, because they have a high threshold for pain tolerance, are determined to man up and soldier on.

We all tend to admire that gutsy approach, but it can become more foolish than gutsy. It may be time to make an appointment or perhaps get to the emergency room pronto. unrelenting chest, shoulder, arm, neck pains should not be toughed out even by the toughest. Likewise, with unrelenting emotional pain, many have spent years in agony with deep emotional pain that could have been greatly relieved if not eliminated by consulting with a competent, caring, and listening ear.

Life is too short and has too much to offer for anyone to unnecessarily endure severe pain of any sort. But are there not those rare cases where no treatment and no doctor prevails?

Yes, there are. And we are truly grateful they are rare. What can be done about them? They are like a modern Job, but so far without the positive ending experienced by that Job in the Bible.

[57 : 57] So for those relatively rare listeners struggling with this kind of physical pain, we will continue to search with you for the why of your unrelenting pain.

Indescribable and unrelenting pain. The pain persists, unrelenting and at times excruciating, night and day, no let up, doctors aplenty, pain management clinics, specialists, highly recommended by other specialists, painkillers, vitamins, herbs, plus all the standard painkillers in the doctor's arsenal. Oh yes, the chiropractic consultants, along with other conventional and unconventional treatment. About the only thing all the medicos of one stripe or another had in common was that each one was very optimistic they could help, they could provide that breakthrough that had eluded all their colleagues.

But the pain persists. And it probably can't be calculated as to how many fine folks scattered all over the nation have been praying. Yet, heaven remains silent.

Bystanders, loved ones, relatives, friends and strangers are at their wits' end. Where do you go from here? What's left that has not been pursued? Even though something else seemed likely not to be the answer, yet it was pursued anyway, just against the chance of the possibility of this different thing, this different treatment might be the answer others have overlooked.

[59 : 38] In town, out of town, adjacent states, many states away for treatment still, the pain persists. Tests. Tests.

More tests. Blood. X-ray. Cat scans. Treatments. Procedures aplenty. And no appreciable relief. And the ultimate insult has been absorbed by the patient more than once, and it was.

It's all in your head. But it's your head and your body and you know it like even the best doctors don't. And it's too bad the docs can't experience what you do for maybe 15 minutes and their tune would be radically different.

But pain and its treatment doesn't work that way. Can we say with all this history of pain that won't quit that God still wants you to trust him?

Can we say the Almighty has his reasons and we defer to his wisdom? We do say that because there's nothing else to say.

[60 : 47] The only alternative is that offered by Job's wife when she advised him to curse God and die. That is less acceptable than trusting him by far.

But no one can fault you if you dispute that. One day all will become abundantly clear and your trusting him and affirming his will for you will be rewarded.

And only then will you be able to rejoice over having gone the right way. Job summed it up by saying though he slay me yet will I trust him.

This is of course the only recourse for the one truly trusting. No doubt it's the least likely and the most difficult but it is still the only one that's right.

Indescribable and unrelenting pain part two. Those of us and that includes almost all of us who have never experienced indescribable and unrelenting pain have no idea whatsoever what people who have this condition must endure hour by hour day by day on and on.

[62 : 19] We cannot fathom the ruination of a normal life. Most pain short term and long term is associated with a loss of some kind.

With indescribable and unrelenting pain the losses are multiple. Chiefest is simply the loss of a normal livelihood. You just can't live a life that's even close to what ordinary folks live.

Neither can those who love you and are closest to you. Your indescribable and unrelenting pain not only affects you but others as well. Even they experience a painful loss due to your pain and their loss is in their agonizing inability to bring your pain to an end.

They truly suffer with your sufferings and try as they might consult with whom they might and pray earnestly as they might along with so many others and still the pain persists.

That's a huge ongoing loss for everyone. A perplexity with medical physical and spiritual ramifications that daily defy a solution.

[63 : 31] The pain and loss of a normal life includes of course a loss of sociability. Overriding pain simply does not allow for socializing and functioning in a casual setting with others.

Often the desire as well as the ability to do so just isn't there or can't be there. The pain will not permit it. It virtually forces one into a life of seclusion and even there the usual things available to one secluded this way may not be available.

Ordinary sights and sounds cannot be enjoyed because the pain won't permit that either. And forget about reading. That's out of the question. Added to such and one's ongoing pain is the knowledge even the certainty that others cannot begin to understand or comprehend in any way what you feel and are experiencing daily and hourly.

And this compounds your pain. So, if you who are hearing this considers it all rather depressing, we admit it is.

But if it's depressing to hear it, can you imagine the depression of living it? Neither can I. What possible good could ever come from a situation like this?

[64 : 57] From this limited human perspective of ours, we look in vain to see anything that could possibly see anything good, not to the sufferer or to the loved ones who suffer with them.

But recall, if you will, how God's perspective is complete, his love and wisdom are boundless, and trusting him in the face of indescribable and unrelenting pain is the acid test of humanity, will we pass it or fail it?

Indescribable Unrelenting Pain, Part 3 Can we safely assert that God, being who he is, will not and cannot allow himself to be in the debt of any man or angel?

Is it not unthinkable that the infinite, omnipotent God of the universe could ever owe any of us mere mortals anything? Were God to owe us anything, for anything, would that not elevate our station to that above his station?

Is it not the case that normally the debtor is the lesser, and the one to whom debt is owed is the greater? And while this may not always be the case among mere men and their dealings, but dealings with the Almighty are of a different kind.

[66 : 19] Any transaction between God and man is always centered upon righteousness. In short, this means with God and man, God will always make it right, whatever it is that is required to make it right.

It would appear that among these is unrequited pain suffered by his righteous ones. If mere men can award one another with a red badge of courage, can God do less for those experiencing indescribable and unrelenting pain, but who nevertheless honor him in the process?

Or is it a perverse thing to see pain of this sort as a rare opportunity that comes only to a small minority? Or is it a sadistic kind of spin to even suggest such?

Yet, who can deny the immense pain God's servants underwent in Hebrews chapter 11? Yes, but for most of them, their pain was brief, not the unrelenting kind.

And in addition, they were volunteer types who chose to suffer pain and other adversity in order to be faithful in honoring God. But this pain that is indescribable and unrelenting is not a matter of one's choice, not the pain we're speaking of here.

[67 : 40] This pain just dropped in, unannounced, and was certainly not volunteered for. Couldn't God have prevented it? Certainly for someone whom he says he loves.

Then why doesn't he? It's that pesky, persistent thing called perspective again. We have ours, and God has his, and the distance between them is incalculable.

In admitting God's perspective is complete, taking everything into consideration, as opposed to our perspective that is so flawed and lacking, can we just say we do not know the why of all this pain, but he does, and we defer to his love and wisdom even in the midst of our pain?

And if you can, you are a very rare person. Rest assured, God will reward that in a way that only he can. This doesn't mean we give up on trying to end the pain.

We are still human and want a normal life. But if having a so called normal life means having our will rather than God's will, then don't we know of someone else in a certain garden who was faced with that choice?

[68 : 59] And which way did he go? The Root of All Our Pain No matter what your particular question of why is, no matter who it is that is suffering pain of whatever kind, one commonality is behind it all.

There are usually other factors involved as well when trying to fix the source for the pain or adversity one may be experiencing, but you may be absolutely certain that the principal reason is the fallenness of our humanity living in an equally fallen world.

This blankets us everyone. We will consolidate what we have learned thus far, and though our list is incomplete, these are nine realities every member of the human race must contend with.

Without equivocation, the source of anyone's pain, of whatever kind, to whatever extent, is tied to one or more of these nine realities.

You will find the source of your particular why here also. And here they are. 1. God created all things because he chose to do so, and such was his sovereign right.

[70 : 21] 2. The world as God originally created it was pronounced by him as very good. 3. The original world, being very good, was devoid of pain, suffering, and death.

4. God created angels and humans with the ability to choose a course of action. 5. They exercised their will as free moral agents in a way that was contrary to God's will.

And their willful disobedience brought moral and physical ruination upon all of creation. 5. God, being God, was fully aware of the choices volitional beings would make.

Yet, he chose to create them as such, rather than create them without volition. 6. Thus, while God cannot be blamed for the origin of evil, he was responsible for having created beings with the potential for willful disobedience, thus bringing adverse consequences upon all of creation, also setting the stage for subsequent redemption of the fallen world.

7. Suffering and death to which we are all susceptible is a direct result of our membership in the human race. 8.

[71 : 49] This means if one is undergoing adversity of any kind, it is directly related to merely being human. 9. Included in the totality of the world's fallenness is the corruption of the biological gene pool, human and animal, resulting in congenital, physical, and neurological abnormalities of all kinds.

While these nine realities are far from exhaustive, we are confident they contain important answers to our individual questions of why.

Why this? Why me? Why now? So, with these nine realities, we have a base from which to continue our exploration of the wise, and we shall proceed upcoming.

You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Wiseman. Preview of Upcoming Volume 23.

This present Volume 22 has been filled with really hard gut-level issues attempting to deal with pain, its causes, and ramifications.

[73 : 17] It probably has not been easy to listen to. It hasn't been easy to deliver either. In fact, it's the most difficult we've ever undertaken.

We've talked about pain usually involving a loss of some kind or even multiple losses. Many of you listening have, as I have, experienced the sudden, completely unexpected death of a long-term spouse, or the heartache of caring for a mentally retarded child, delightful as she was, only to have her sweet life unexpectedly end at age 30.

Still, as painful as they were, they were not unrelenting, ongoing, as is the case of those we have addressed in the previous three segments of this present volume.

I certainly cannot say I identify with them in their pain because I can't. Theirs is indescribable and unrelenting, remember? That's different.

Radically different. The balance of the human race can be thankful that this kind of unmanageable, unrelenting pain is experienced only by a very small minority.

[74 : 36] Most of us will never know the persistent agonizing condition these few must deal with on an ongoing basis.

Segments dealing with emotional pain originating from several different sources will be addressed on our next volume, number 23, of Christianity Clarified.

These will include emotional pain derived from loss of trust, as in marital infidelity, loss of trust or betrayal by an authority figure who perhaps took advantage of us and other such like issues.

It is remarkable how many people have been severely scarred from their childhood because they trusted someone who was unworthy of their trust.

Depending on how the victim is wired emotionally, some are more able to put it behind them, painful though it may be, and move on with their life.

[75 : 38] But others who have a different psychological and emotional constitution may be so deeply impacted, it profoundly affects the whole of their being, even including how they are able to relate to their marriage partner, physically and emotionally.

And this is so very prevalent in today's overly sexualized society, so it needs to be dealt with. We've no illusions of removing the pain, so it never again occurs, but there may be a significant reduction of pain, especially in the areas of shame and guilt, that haunts some victims with a vengeance. women who struggle with having opted for abortion agonize sometimes for years, every year the would-be son or daughter would have celebrated a birthday, or the child they see at the mall or in the playground that would be just about the age and size of the baby they chose to never let see life.

These desperately need to know there is forgiveness and healing available for having made those choices that have plagued them with profound regret. You see, pain is an equal opportunity visitor. We experience it because of the inexorable law of cause and effect, a law that is not suspended even for Christians. Pain comes our way because of the actions of others, especially if significant others.

[77 : 15] And the things that caused our pain cannot be undone because what's done is done. But being able to pick up those pieces and get our life back on track is very doable and certainly very desirable.

Life is just too short and has too much to offer not to. And part of the benefit of Christianity Clarified is that it offers help, hope, and healing in a completely private setting that need not involve another single person unless you choose to include them while listening to the content.

So, if you receive this present volume 22 automatically in the mail, then volume 23 will be along shortly. If not, you may request it by writing to Christianity Clarified, Grace Bible Church, 1500 Group Road, that's spelled G-R-O-O-P, 1500 Group Road, Springfield, Ohio, 45504.

Or you may contact us online at gracebiblespringfield.com, all one word, gracebiblespringfield.com, or by telephone at 937-322-3113.

And if you wish a friend to receive this content, send us their mailing address, and we will send them a copy free and postpaid, no strings attached. We will use your name as the one who thought of them and wanted them to receive this material.

[78 : 51] But in no case will you or they ever be asked for donations or pledges, nor will anyone's name be sold or given to others for any reason. This is Marv Wiseman, Pastor of Grace Bible Church since 1971.

Thanks so much for listening and being a recipient of Christianity Clarified, provided through the Barbara Wiseman Memorial Fund, established by the generosity of the Congregation of Grace Bible Church.

May God bless you richly.