

Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, is with us
"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,
and shew my people their transgression,
and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1

Yahweh's Law

Study Prayerfully & Study Carefully

Why do the Righteous Suffer?

Reading:
Isaiah Chapter 24

1. Introduction

Human suffering is on the increase. **Many believers are giving up their faith.** Great men's hearts are failing them for fear, because something is radically wrong with civilization. What is it? Where have we gone wrong? Man, who has plumbed the deepest oceans, scaled the highest mountains and walked on the moon, is incapable of removing **human suffering**. We notice also the rapid increase in **natural disasters**: volcanoes, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, droughts and famines. What's going on? Why does God (if there is a God, many would add,) allow these things to happen? **Is He perhaps behind it?**

Isaiah 24: 1: *"Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.*

2: And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him.

3: The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word.

*4: **The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish.**"*

2. Broken the Everlasting Covenant

But why does the Almighty allow such destruction to take place? He could stop it - easily. Why doesn't He? The answer is given in the next two verses.

Isaiah 24: 5: *"The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; **because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.***

*6: **Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth...**"*

In other words: the world is being punished because of man's blatant sin. **The earth is under a curse!** The Almighty's laws have been transgressed, twisted and broken with blasphemous impunity. Yes, that is why the earth is under His curse.

3. The Blessings of Yahweh

But you may well ask, “Why should the righteous suffer with the wicked?” They haven't transgressed the laws, changed the ordinances or broken the everlasting covenant. Did not God promise blessings to the obedient? What about all those blessings promised to the righteous? For example:

Blessings to the individual

Psalm 1: 1: *“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful...*

3: And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”

Blessings to Abraham & Israel

Genesis 12: 2: *“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:*

3: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

Blessings to a congregation:

Numbers 6: 24: *“The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:*

25: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

26: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

27: And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.”

4. Irreversible Blessings

Moreover, what about those texts which teach that, once given, no one can reverse God's blessing?

Numbers 23: 20: *“Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and **I cannot reverse it.**”*

The mercenary prophet **Balaam** learned to his bitter cost that Yahweh's blessings cannot be reversed. Whoever the Almighty blesses is blessed. Any attempt to curse a blessed believer will backfire and end in more blessing to the believer; not to mention the dire punishment that will fall upon those who attempt to reverse God's blessing.

5. A Spiritual Paradox

But, again we ask: *“**Why do the righteous suffer?**”* It's a strange paradox to see many obedient believers suffering greatly; often more than outright sinners. Why is this? Take for example the Bible VIPs: Abel, Job, Joseph, Naomi, Elijah, Jeremiah, David, Daniel, the 12 Apostles and countless saints down through the ages; not forgetting **Yeshua the Messiah**. All of these obedient souls suffered greatly. Why? Didn't Yahweh promise blessing to the obedient? **Why then did the Almighty allow these righteous believers to suffer?** Paul's testimony provides some answers to this puzzling question.

2 Corinthians 11: 23: *“Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.*

24: Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

25: Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26: In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

27: In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

28: Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

29: Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?
 30: If I must needs glory, **I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.**
 2 Corinthians 12: 5: *"Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, **but in mine infirmities.***
 6: *For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.*
 7: ***And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.***
 8: *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*
 9: *And he said unto me, **My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.***
 10: ***Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.***

6. Reasons for Suffering

Consider for a moment the two amazing truths Paul mentions in those few verses.

- ***"There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."***
- ***"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."***

Here we can see the Almighty's reasons for allowing His chosen and faithful servant Paul to suffer.

Reason One

To keep Paul from running away with the idea that his personal goodness and fine intellect had somehow triggered his amazing spiritual understanding. In other words to keep Paul humble.

Reason Two

That the Almighty's power is best demonstrated when a believer is totally helpless and weak; when he cannot rely on his own physical or spiritual strength or even the strength of others. For the fact is, when we are at our weakest we cling to our Heavenly Father all the more; and it is particularly at those times that His great love and power become more evident and His presence most appreciated.

7. The True Believer's Response

Having learned, through bitter suffering, these two vital lessons, the Apostle Paul triumphantly declares:

***"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches,
 in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses
 FOR CHRIST'S SAKE:
 for when I am weak, then am I strong."***

This, then, is the divine lesson, the real reason why the LORD allows His people to suffer. It is to demonstrate that however weak we may happen to be, and no matter how grim the circumstances we may find ourselves in: sickness, poverty, loneliness, persecution or pain, **we can willingly bear it FOR CHRIST'S SAKE!** For the fact is the Almighty is proving to the universe that:

- Believers can maintain their faith under the worst of circumstances; that even when they are at their weakest, the Almighty's power can uphold them and make them conquerors, even when threatened by death.
- And that Satan **can never reverse** the blessing of the Almighty.

- When **Yahweh is with us**, who dare be against us?

The Almighty is not doing this to boast. Remember He is a humble Being, more humble than anyone who exists. He is simply proving that **Lucifer** (Satan) is a liar and, by comparison, impotent. Yahweh is demonstrating before a watching universe that even the weakest believer - with Him on his/her side - is more than a match for all the forces of evil. Lucifer wants to prove that he is wiser, stronger and could be a better ruler of the universe than the **Creator**. And so in his devilish zeal he attacks everything and everyone on the Almighty's side. When the LORD Yahweh blesses, Satan seeks to curse. When the LORD gives joy, Satan tries to drown that joy in sorrow. When the LORD gives light, Satan tries to snuff out the light with darkness. But Lucifer's efforts, though often temporarily successful, are in the end **all doomed to failure**. And the whole universe is about to witness his humiliating defeat. (Read about Lucifer's end in Isaiah chapter 14)

8. Summary

Are you an obedient believer who finds yourself suffering in one way or another? Do you wonder why? Think about Job and the prophets of old. Think of the Apostle Paul. They too were faithful and they suffered greatly; probably far more than you ever will. Why did they suffer? The answer is, because the Almighty was demonstrating in their lives one or more of the following facts:

- That He can provide grace and strength to meet every believer's need in every circumstance, no matter how bad it may become. He is always with His followers.
- That even the very best believer is in danger of becoming smug, complacent and proud. Suffering keeps a person humble.
- That Yahweh's mighty power is best demonstrated when we are at our weakest and most dependent. Because it is only then that we totally rely on Him. At other times we tend to rely on our own abilities and resources, which at best are pathetic.
- And that even under the worst conditions Yahweh's power can help us overcome Lucifer's fiercest attacks: pain, privation or persecution, it matters not. For **when we are weak, then we are strong**. This is a lesson all believers must learn - through suffering!

For further information on Human Suffering see: **Lesson 15 & Sermon Note 275**

AMEN!

In the Son's Name — For the Father's glory.
Elder: *Max W. Mader*

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