

WHY DO THE RIGHTEOUS SUFFER?

Scripture: Job 24:23-25

23 He provides them with security, and they are supported; And His eyes are on their ways.

24 They are exalted a little while, then they are gone; Moreover, they are brought low and like everything gathered up; Even like the heads of grain they are cut off.

25 Now if it is not so, who can prove me a liar, And make my speech worthless?"

Introduction: Job raises two important questions:

Is it not God who caused all his sufferings? How come wicked enjoy life while the righteous are punished and they suffer constantly?

These are tough questions to answer indeed. But God does provide the appropriate answer through today's Scripture portions, and I hope you will be able to hear them and comprehend today! Since there are too many repetitions, I'll be focusing on a few important passages, taken from 4 different chapters to understand Job's theological concerns.

Eliphaz responds:

Job 22:5-9.

5 "Is not your wickedness great, And your iniquities without end?

6 "For you have taken pledges of your brothers without cause, And stripped men naked.

7 "To the weary you have given no water to drink, And from the hungry you have withheld bread.

8 "But the earth belongs to the mighty man, And the honorable man dwells in it.

9 "You have sent widows away empty, And the strength of the orphans has been crushed.

Eliphaz here accuses his friend falsely. What are those accusations?

1. Job's wickedness is great and his iniquities without end.
2. You have taken Pledges of your brothers without cause.
3. Strip men naked. (Taking all their clothes because they could not return the borrowed money - Jesus' teaching.
4. He has given no water to the weary and no food to the hungry.
5. Sent widows away empty
6. The orphans have been ignored.

Job replies:

Job 23:3-7.

3 Oh that I knew where I might find Him, That I might come to His seat!

*4 I would present my case before Him
And fill my mouth with arguments.*

5 I would learn the words which He would answer And perceive what He would say to me.

6 Would He contend with me by the greatness of His power?

No, surely, He would pay attention to me.

*7 There the upright would reason with Him;
And I would be delivered forever from my Judge.*

All this time, Job was asking God to come close to him, and hear his case. But now, Job would like to take his case to his God of the universe. He would like to come near his throne of judgement face to face and plead his cause. Job was anxious to hear what God had to tell him concerning his pathetic situation! What would God do? Would He shout and scream at Job, or He would listen attentively with caring love?

Job feels confident that His God would listen to him, reason with Him, and deliver him!

Yes, our God loves to reason, and teach us the truth. Any doubt in your heart, talk to Him, and He will bring the answer for you through His Word! God loves those who seek Him, and learn from Him through reasoning! Take those hard questions to the Lord through the word and reason out! Talk to him as you would talk to your father.

Job. 23:10-12

10 But He knows the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

11 My foot has held fast to His path.

I have kept His way and not turned aside.

12 I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.

Gods knows the way we take, and He knows exactly where we go, and where we land! Job says confidently that God knows him, and he claims that he will come out as pure gold after being tested by various tests, and trials!

Job claims that he holds onto the path of his God, and he has not taken any off route to his own la la land anytime in his life.

Vs 12 seems to be added after Mosaic law because it talks about the commands of God, and the words of His mouth. In any case, whatever words Job heard through the mouth of God, he hid it in his heart, and it became more than his necessary food. This particular thought reminds us of the verse, which our Lord quoted also!

Man shall not live by bread alone but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

For Jesus, His food and meat was to do the will of God! He was obedient even unto the cross! Abiding in the Word of God is the key to the crown of glory.

Job 23:13-17

13 But He is unique and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, that He does.

14 For He performs what is appointed for me, And many such decrees are with Him.

15 Therefore, I would be dismayed at His presence; When I consider, I am terrified of Him.

16 It is God who has made my heart faint,

And the Almighty who has dismayed me,

17 But I am not silenced by the darkness,

Nor deep gloom which covers me.

The whole crux of Job's argument is that God is the cause of all his suffering! Job says that God is unique or different from us in His own way. Who can change His ways? He will do what

pleases Him. Job thought that God ordained what is appointed for Job! This is a hyper Calvinistic predestination statement. Hindus also make similar remarks. Our fate is written on our head. But it is not true! Our fate can change just like that if we come to Christ and surrender! We receive eternal abundant life through Jesus Christ, our Lord! The Spirit of love, joy, peace steers us in the right path! By following the wrong philosophy, we resign and accept defeat too easily. Come to Christ! Take your problems to the Lord through prayer. He will deliver you from any kind of problems. He can change your fate, as He changed the fate of a person who was born blind, as He redeemed Zacchaeus, as He changed the lives of lepers, the woman with an issue of blood, as He changed the fate of a bunch of fishermen. Come to Jesus to change your destiny and fate!

Job says that he would be dismayed at God's presence. Why? Because God had punished him for no apparent reason? He says he will not be silenced by darkness nor gloom and doom; he will be bold enough to ask God straight, "why are you doing this to me?"

Let me now ask you this question: Did God bring all these troubles to Job? Was it not Satan? God did not tell Satan to kill all the children, strip all Job's wealth, and his health. Satan did it. But God did take the hedge around Job. Sometimes, God does that to us so that we may not be in a bubble of safety always but learn about life little by little. We could protect a teenage girl for a while but eventually we may have to take that hedge around her so that she can learn about the cruel world all around her and learn to be cautious. God removing the hedge from us is to train us, to test us, and to make us strong. Sometimes, you may have to swim and survive without God helping you also! God helps us when we cannot help ourselves.

The first skill I would like to teach my children is not video game, or soccer or music, but swimming! It is so important. You never know when you will need it. When I taught my children, I used the inflated wings on both hands. When it is fully inflated, they can swim all by themselves and they will not drown. Slowly I started taking the air out of those wings. Now they had to use their hands and muscles more to float around. Finally, they learned to swim without those wings. Their protection was gone! God guaranteed one thing for Job, his life! Satan could not take that away. Our life will ALWAYS in His hand, and He will never leave us nor forsake us. Remember, God will always watch over us like a mother over her children. Yet the children should learn to fix their breakfast, if they fall, they should be able to get up all by themselves, rub it and keep moving. Mom should help only when the children have tough time helping themselves! For the most part, we must learn to swim ourselves! We may have the wings of God until we become strong! But once we become strong, we should be able to function without His constant help. He trains us through our sufferings and pain. We may have to count it all joy! So let us remember, God is not the author of confusion in our life! But Job thought that God was the cause of all his problems. He felt that he was punished hard for his faithfulness to God. Another issue that was bothering Job was this issue - how come wicked go unpunished while the righteous are being punished?

Job. 24:1-3.

1 Why are times not stored up by the Almighty, And why do those who know Him not see His days?

2 Some remove the landmarks.

They seize and devour flocks.

3 They drive away the donkeys of the orphans; They take the widow's ox for a pledge.

The righteous do not seem to see the light of his days, and he gets cut off too quickly, but the wicked seem to enjoy long, quality, prosperous life? They do all kinds of wicked things, yet they

get away with everything, and there is no one to punish him. If punishments from God upon the wicked, in this world, are so certain as you say, why do not they who are truly pious see them openly inflicted?

Job then goes onto explain how wicked exploit others and prosper. Please read it for yourself when you have time!

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Job finally admits that death comes upon wicked men at last; First, it comes on them when they have risen to prominence, and popularity. Next, it is sudden and painless, preceded by no long, lingering illness, but just a sinking into non-existence, a tranquil passing away. Third, it is at a ripe age, when they have reached the full term of human life and are as ears of corn ripe for the harvest.

Conclusion:

1. Our God is a merciful, loving God. He will listen to our cries, make us see our short comings, forgive and cleanse us!
2. Those who are born of the Spirit can go to the throne of mercy and grace, boldly!
3. God is not the author of confusion! He will punish the wicked in His time.
4. He does not destroy the wicked swiftly, because He wants them to repent and come to Him!
5. God wants us to swim in the ocean of life ourselves. When we cannot help ourselves, then He will step in and help us!
6. God is not the author of all our problems. The problems come because of our own mistakes, or Satan attacks us, or the very nature of the struggles of our life itself.

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