

THE PATHFINDER

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WHY MUST WE SUFFER SO HORRIBLY?

In a world created by a loving, omnipotent God who is ever-present we cannot help from questioning why He permits horrible things to come upon good people, especially upon those who are called by His name. Everyone has wondered why we have to suffer. Can we blame it on sin, and is Satan the cause it? If so, does God harshly judge everyone that falls into those cunning snares? Or is the inescapable punishment reserved for specific ones, you know, those who are extremely evil?

Many are perplexed and left without answers, as they see unparalleled wickedness in both high and low places all over the world. Fear and dread churns in people's minds from expected worldwide doom, which is common in all sectors of life. An example of this is found in the words of one who wrote and expressed her terrible anxiety over an act of evil that took place a few years ago:

"I watched the news this afternoon (I don't know why I did, it almost always depresses me) and saw that a man in Japan brutally stabbed 21 first and second grade children in their classrooms, killing 8 of them. Whenever I hear about these tragedies, great or small, I fall apart. I cry and I mourn for the victims and their families even though I don't know them. I become so upset, that even after I gain control of myself, my mind keeps wandering back to how those people must feel.

"I question continuously ***why must we suffer so horribly***, and how the death of innocent children by a madman fits into any kind of plan by God. Some days I believe that evil is created by stupid humans, and

then days like today, I believe there is a force that loves to see our suffering. I don't know how to continue to see God as a good, loving, and omnipotent force, our Father, when he allows this to happen to his children. I also don't know how to tell myself that these people's suffering is not my own, and that I just need to go on with my day and forget about it. I was hoping that you could offer me some advice, or point me in the direction of some readings that would allow me to deal with these facts of life. I know that I am not made to understand the mind of God, but I feel I need some sort of understanding to get through days like today. Thanks for listening."

Questions concerning such horrid acts upon the innocent, especially children, are, no doubt, among the most frequently asked, yet they are probably the least able to be answered. Notwithstanding, when we weigh in the balance good and evil, justice and injustice, love and hate, and knowing somewhat the plan of God for His creation, we can see that these things have to do with the interplay between good and evil, and that in due time it all works toward the incomprehensible good for every person. It is difficult for us to imagine that anything good could possibly come from the evil that sweeps over us at times.

Supposedly, encouragement comes when we read scriptures like: "**A false balance is an abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is His delight.**" *Proverbs 11:1*. And, "**A just weight and balance are the LORD'S: all the weights of the bag are His work.**" *Proverbs 16:11*. Also, the apostle Paul assured us, "**For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.**" *Romans 8:18*.

Do such statements give us solace in the midst of anguish and heartbreak? Probably not, but sometimes that is all we have to rest our weary minds upon. Unless they are breathed from on high by the Spirit, they may be no more than hollow words. So we will proceed.

With all the evil that has swept the earth since mankind has so terribly profaned it, we can know that Paul was right, that the glory revealed in us and

to the whole world – when all things are gathered together into Christ Jesus – will far outweigh the evil of this marred world. And let us be quick to embrace that *there is hope for a tree if it is cut down and its stock withers away. At the appointed time and the scent of water, it will live again and like a plant come forth in a new and living way*, as noted in **Job 14:7-15**. Our problem is patience, or the lack thereof. Unlike the eternal God who is full of patience, we, as temporal beings have a difficult time with it. **1st Corinthians 13:4** says that Love is patient, and John identified love by saying: "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. **God is love**; and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him." **1 John 4:16**.

Therefore, if we are to have more patience, we need more love, and to have more love means that we must experientially be more in God who is Love. It is this love that gives us peace that passes all understanding: "**And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**" **Philippians 4:7**. It is being consumed by Christ, filled with His love and patience that will bring peace to our troubled minds. Although we may not see an immediate balance of good and evil, we can rest assured that there is not one hurt or injustice that will not be made right. Moreover, those suffering and dying will reap an incomprehensible life of the ages in Jesus Christ.

When Christians suffer terrible afflictions, horrible illnesses, or dire hardships, very often their brothers and sisters either think or accuse them of harboring hidden sins. They then believe that God is punishing them by heaping all these dreadful maladies upon them. For instance, one of our dearest friends, a 92 year old saint of the highest order, has been bedfast for three years with breast and bone cancer. She was told by a very religious sister that she evidently had hidden sin in her life, and she needed to repent before she could be healed.

An example akin to this can be seen in the story of the young blind man who Jesus had healed (**John 9:3**), and the religious leaders ask Him which had sinned, the young man or his parents. They were told that neither had sinned;

but it was in order for God's glory to be seen by all. Frankly, the Pharisees were just as blind only in a different manner which seems to be far more difficult to heal than physical blindness.

The same goes for Job and his *comforting* friends. Even though God said that he was righteous in all his ways, Elihu lambasted him in several chapters, especially in chapter 33 where he accused Job of pride and arrogance. Moreover, most pastors and teachers believe this assuming *accuser*, while discounting what God said about him, namely:

"And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, **a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?** and still **he holdeth fast his integrity**, although thou moved me against him, to destroy him without cause." **Job 2:3**.

Moreover, "After the LORD had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, 'I am angry with you and your two friends, because **you have not spoken the truth about Me**, as my servant Job has.'" **Job 42:7**.

Job had three friends accusing him; but there was another, which was Elihu. His discourse is contained in chapters thirty-two through thirty-seven and has a higher conception of God. He is not classified with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar; even so, he is still a dogmatist, and his eloquent rhetoric is marred by self-assertiveness. God's judgment of him is that he darkened divine counsel by his words (**Job 38:2**). Elihu was guilty of the same charge he had brought against Job (**Job 34:35; 35:16**).

People, saints and sinners alike, reap what they sow, good or evil, health or sickness; but when sowing is not a factor – it still rains good and evil on them both, on the just and the unjust. What a mystery!

Daily, we see the depravity of man at its lowest depth and feel that such never deserves His gracious rain; but then we hear Jesus saying, "Father forgive them..." perhaps we get a glimpse of God's love. And when we look at the awesome darkness that shrouds the world, it shows us the awesome light

that will someday shine in every man, woman, and child. When we look at the horrid things that happened to precious people all over the world, we can be encouraged that ***where evil abounds grace will much more abound.*** **Romans 5:20.**

There are times when waves of sorrow overtake us and others, and even though we may not know the victims of affliction and tragedy, we mourn with and for them. When we are at a loss for what to do or say, the "...Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." **Romans 8:26.** Our sorrow becomes more than human compassion. It is spiritual intercession on their behalf, and is working a far greater thing in them than we could possibly imagine.

Such things are mysteries that can take more than a lifetime to plumb their depths and understand. Even though clarity may not be seen at the moment, with God being infinite love and wisdom we can rest assured that everything is and will be well. Even though we all walk at times through the valley of the shadow of death, it is all well, and not only for us, but also the world. Surely, corruption and injustices cover the earth like dark clouds, and they are ***abominations to the LORD;*** but ***He delights in equity and justice which He will impose upon every sin and situation,*** as seen in **Proverbs 11:1.** For "***A just weight and balance are the LORD'S: all the weights of the bag are His work.***" **Proverbs 16:11.**

It is not easy for some people to believe that all that is in the world is God's work. They also have difficulty in believing a couple of other scriptures that are just as clearly stated: "I form the light, and ***create darkness:*** I make peace, and ***create evil: I the LORD do all these things.***" **Isaiah 45:7.** And "***Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire,*** and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and ***I have created the waster to destroy.***" **Isaiah 54:16.**

It should be apparent to most of us that the Lord's elect, the champions of His Kingdom, have been tested and will continue to be tested; therefore, the adversary, which is a thief, a waster, a destroyer was created for that purpose. Jesus said that this infamous foe "...cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill,

and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." **John 10:10**.

It seems that very few understand that the devil is an entity that was created for God's purpose. Isaiah said that it was for blowing upon the coals in the fire to bring us forth as an instrument worthy of His work. This is the infamous smith that heats the furnace seven times hotter. Therefore, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the **fiery trial** which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." **1 Peter 4:12**.

Very often people's problems come when they find themselves in the hardships of refinement. Straightway they reject it! They ask, "Why would God let me go through something so terrible when He could prevent it?" The answer is simple — He is not "*letting*" you go through it — He is "*making*" you go through it! He is driving you through it as surely as an unbroken horse is driven into a corral and broken by its master, or the master's trainer, such as the smith that blows upon the coals.

If the horse learns obedience, forsaking its own will, it can then be used throughout the man's kingdom. If not, it might be sold and become dog food and soap. If our will is not broken during this time, and we insist on maintaining our own self-expression, I doubt that we will wind up as dog food and soap; but we will be of little value in the kingdom of God. Think about it!

A renowned voice in God's kingdom, J. Preston Eby, said:

"It is the elect of the Lord who have been specifically selected by the Father to partake of the sufferings of Christ through the trials and tribulations which He brings into our lives. It was the plan and purpose of God that each son of God should be tested and tried to prepare us for the glory of His kingdom we are destined to receive. Don't think that you have to suffer great things like martyrdom or twenty years in a rat-infested prison in order for God to accomplish His work. There is a vast variety of events in our everyday lives uniquely designed to test every area the Lord would put His hand on. Each of us has had a unique set of tests and trials to go through to build the character of

Christ in our lives. **Our trials have not been harder than anyone else's, just different.** We are distinct members of the Christ body, and the Lord's processings for each one varies according to His purpose in us and the place we shall fill."

We doubt that a great number of people could be found in any or all religious organizations who will warmly embrace these thoughts. Frankly, my own flesh doesn't care for these trying ordeals that invade my comfort zone; but they come just the same; for our Father knows better than the one who would choose to live on *Easy Street*. Knowing how the carnal man hates pain of any sort and shuns anything that prevents him from doing things his own way, it is easily seen how religious doctrines generally bend in the direction that all evils are orchestrated by the devil, an enemy that is very nearly as mighty as God Himself, one that is constantly messing up His plans. Even though prayer vigils, fasting, and other zealous efforts are executed to ward off these awful evils, they come to pass right on schedule. There is no way to subvert them; because they are preordained processes for every child of God, especially those predestined to sonship. However, it is not only those of God's household who are subjected to these trying things, the whole world is afflicted by them. King Solomon wrote that "There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and **it is common among men.**" **Eccl. 6:1.**

Since evil is common among men, do you suppose God should spare his own sons and daughters from this common denominator? He did not spare His first Son from it, so I doubt that any of us will merit special favor and avoid the flames either. We will all be salted with fire. The fact is, it would do us a great disservice to be protected from this common evil. We would never mature enough to be of help to anyone, including ourselves.

We have heard people say, "Oh Brother, we feel your pain," when in reality they only see our tears and sad countenance. They, therefore, pity us, they have sympathy for us, but it is not empathy from having gone through the same themselves. Unless they have also crossed that dreaded valley of fire, it is impossible for them to relate or empathize. They would merely say, "*God bless you brother,*" and then go their own way rather than ministering aid,

soothing their pain, and nursing them back to health.

Sympathy and *empathy* are terms with very significant distinctions. Sympathy and empathy are both acts of feeling, but with sympathy you feel **for** the person; you're sorry **for** them or pity them; but you don't specifically feel or understand what they are going through. Sometimes we are left with little choice but to feel sympathy, because, if we haven't experienced it ourselves, we really cannot understand or be touched by the hardships of someone else.

Empathy, of course, can be described as feeling **with**, rather than **for**, the person. Namely, you are placing yourself in that person's place. You have a good sense of what they are going through, and you know by experience what they feel. Of course, on the natural scale of things, it may be impossible to fully empathize, because each individual's thoughts and feelings are going to be unique. Yet, the idea of empathy implies a much more active process than sympathy. Instead of feeling sorry **for** someone, you are sorry **with** them and have clothed yourself in the same mantle of their tragedy. You truly feel the evil that had befallen them.

I praise God that each of us do not have to experience and empathize with every evil that afflicts every person in the world; but I believe among the body of Christ there is always someone who can relate to every individual in the world. And each of these sons of God will not only empathize with them, but will make intercession on their behalf.

With such evil that has been running rampant for thousands of years, one would think it an impossibility for anything to change; but it will be different, not only for individuals but for all! In due season all nations will be possessed by the Lord and His anointed. Peace will be the core of their hearts. It matters not that they presently want to kill everyone who is not of their race, religion, creed, and evil mind-set. They will be changed by the mighty, flaming power of God's grace.

At this present time, there is a flame in our hearts to impart life to every soul. When godly sorrow works repentance unto salvation, and they know

Christ's love, the world will know war no more; for their spirit will be like the elect of God, namely, the Spirit of love and peace!

Something is happening, brethren, and we are right in the middle of it, because it's right in the middle of us. We couldn't escape it or stop it if we wanted to! If we happened to have a thought to stop the sun from rising in the morning, we know the futility of attempting such foolishness. It is an impossibility, and obviously, neither can we nor do we want to stop the Sun/Son from rising in our hearts.

When He becomes our world, our everything, we can do nothing but radiate with His bright glory. There will be no effort in being His gloriously peculiar people. We are now and will continue to be who we are in Him. However, should we try to be glorious, should we claim to have overcome and are already walking 100% in the Spirit, our countenance will languish. Rather than shining as a son or daughter by nature, our glory would fade to a poor imitation, a self-transformation with no substance, and everyone would see the façade except those going through the motions and acting the part. There are actors who get so caught up in the part that they are playing, they actually believe they are that character. Neither the lion nor the dove has to claim what they are. Without trying – they simply ARE – and it is obvious to everyone.

Impatience is one of the handicaps that cause some to rush the hour of our Lord's appearing which will be in, through, and from His corporate body. Impatience serves very often to unveil a person's unfinished work while the sculptor is still in the process of chiseling away at his or her flesh. Impatience of the immature has been the undoing of many, and it seems to be more prevalent today with those of "*deeper*" truths. It has born haste, and we fear that there will be a great waste.

In an old book, *Things of The Mind* by John Lancaster Spalding, 1894, he wrote that:

"Haste is the mark of immaturity. He who is master of his tools and certain of himself knows that he is able, and neither hurries nor worries, but works and waits. As what one can lift or bear depends on strength

and training of body, so what one can understand or appreciate depends on vigor and discipline of mind. You would pour truth into the hearts of men, but would thou pour water into a sieve? Your doctrines will be of little help unless the heart and mind be made whole."

Additional thoughts from Preston Eby:

"As one has written: 'In many of its aspects *haste* is the mark of immaturity. To those who are now becoming spiritually mature, there is an undergirding of knowledge that *'to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose...'* (Eccl.. 3:1), and they desire to only move in GOD'S TIMING, not to rush ahead in a final outburst of *self-promotion* to claim to be this, or that. When the vision seems to tarry, we can well afford to *'wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry'* (Hab. 2:3). At the Father's appointed time He will fully manifest His own – placing them in the position for which He has been preparing them. Yes, in the making of kings and priests through whom God shall administer the affairs of His kingdom, He has carefully selected His vessels, and is now processing them by means that stagger the imagination with their intensity and scope. But God shall not be satisfied with an inferior product, hence the transformation must penetrate into every fiber of our being until the whole of all things becomes A NEW CREATION in Christ Jesus.

"I am reminded of the boy who wanted to help the butterfly out of its pupa. He saw that it struggled hard to get loose. Only a few strands held it back. So the boy clipped these off. The butterfly was free! And the boy was very happy, both about the butterfly and about the little operation he had performed. But so much greater did his sorrow become when he discovered what a well-intended but destructive labor of love he had performed. The butterfly could not fly and could not learn to fly. The exertions by which it was to have worked itself out of the pupa were what would have strengthened it and enabled it to fly!

"I mentioned earlier the words of David wherein he said, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes' (Ps.

119:71). You may wonder as I have — what kind of theology is this? How could my present distresses work in me the qualifications necessary to be a king-priest! The Hebrew word for affliction here means, 'browbeaten, troubled, abased, chastened, defiled, hurt, humbled, weakened, depressed.' When you put this meaning into the verse, suddenly it reads, 'It is good for me to have been browbeaten, troubled, abased, chastened, defiled, hurt, humbled, weakened, and depressed. And it all has been for one purpose — so that I could learn the Lord's statutes! The word statutes in this verse means 'engraved law.' The Psalmist is saying, 'It's good that I went through all these troubles — because in the process God was engraving His laws, ways, and nature in my heart!'" — End Quote.

We do not want to conclude this study without borrowing some priceless thoughts from the late George Hawtin:

"Undoubtedly there is a day coming when every intricate detail of His fathomless purpose shall be revealed to our wondering eyes. Then and then alone shall we see the reason behind the storms that beset us. Then we shall understand the reason for pain and suffering and see what PURPOSE it had in our molding and making. Then we shall understand the PURPOSE of death and sorrow, and why war darkened our horizons and disappointment deferred our hopes and dashed our ambitions. And though we cannot understand it all now, how it lightens our load and fills our hearts with love and understanding when we know that back of it all is one great revealing truth – GOD'S PURPOSE!

"Divine, infinite purpose lies behind all things, and the moment this wonderful truth dawns upon your spiritual understanding, all things begin to make sense and your love for God springs from a new foundation, even the foundation of wisdom and understanding. You may not yet understand the purpose of any of the things that have puzzled you, or the reason for the doubts and fears, the pains and woes that often come upon you, but your heart rejoices that in the process of your making – God is using the proper methods to make you according to His purpose....

"Can you not see the tremendous value of the desperate vanity and night of the fall as you read these truths? Can you not see that by the travail, darkness, pain, and temptation of this dismal night of sin, God is building something into the ENTIRE CREATION that will shine and blaze in transcending splendor in the glory of the ages yet unborn? Now listen further while we read the introduction to the above passage. In Romans 8:18-19 the Apostle Paul says, 'For I reckon that the SUFFERINGS OF THIS PRESENT TIME ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE COMPARED WITH THE GLORY THAT SHALL BE REVEALED IN US, for the earnest expectation of creation waits for the MANIFESTATION OF THE SONS OF GOD.' There is PURPOSE in the suffering of this present time. There is glorious unequaled design, for it is the suffering and night the world is enduring now that will bring forth unequaled and unexcelled glory, even the glory of SONSHIP, maturity in the image of God. There is definite purpose in all suffering. It is producing the very image that God desires. He cannot make the kind of sons He wants without the blazing furnaces of suffering and affliction. Do not forget this truth, and do not forget that this kind of fiery trial that is to try you could not have existed without the FALL OF MAN. Oh, how much we miss by believing our stupid traditions which make the fall to be an accident brought about by the cunning of Satan and the inattention of the Lord.

"Christians of all ages have diligently enquired, 'Why do the righteous suffer?' The answer is very, very simple in the light and understanding of His infinite purpose. Few subjects in scripture receive more attention than suffering and affliction, and the Holy Spirit has constantly pointed out that suffering and affliction which come as a result of the FALL OF MAN are for our eternal benefit in bringing us to perfection and sonship. They serve as instruments to mature us. Even of the blessed Christ Himself it is clearly stated, 'Though HE WERE A SON YET LEARNED HE OBEDIENCE THROUGH THE THINGS HE SUFFERED, and BEING MADE PERFECT He became the AUTHOR OF ETERNAL SALVATION.' Heb. 5:8. Listen to James as he exhorts us. 'Take, my brethren, the prophets as an example of SUFFERING AFFLICTION, and of PATIENCE. Behold, we count them happy which

endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the END OF THE LORD; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.' James 5:10-11. Listen to Peter as he declares, 'For as much then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, ARM YOURSELVES with the same mind:

"For he that hath SUFFERED IN THE FLESH hath CEASED FROM SIN, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the WILL OF GOD.' 1 Pet. 4:1, 2. And again, 'But the God of all grace, who hath CALLED US UNTO ETERNAL GLORY by Jesus Christ, AFTER YOU HAVE SUFFERED A WHILE make you PERFECT, ESTABLISH, STRENGTHEN and settle you.' 1 Pet. 5:10. Listen to Paul again, as he declares, 'For our light affliction which is but for a moment is WORKING IN US A FAR MORE EXCEEDING AND ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY.' 2 Cor. 4:17.

"I cannot go on with the scriptures that show the vast benefits derived from suffering, affliction, sorrow, heartache, pain, deferred hopes, loss, disappointment, and the thousand other things men endure. You may study them all for yourselves. Let me assure you, however, of this: the anguish and sorrow of all these things are the furnace that refines the gold and brings us to MATURITY AND THE IMAGE OF THE LORD. When God proclaimed, 'LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR IMAGE AND AFTER OUR LIKENESS,' little did any creature know the eternal methods and fires He would use to perfect that image beyond the power of destruction. None of these things could have been accomplished without the FALL OF MAN, for without the FALL none of them would have existed at all.

"When we realize that...being wise through knowledge and experience and not innocence, we would know both good and evil and could choose the good and refuse the evil. Never again will sin darken the universe, for a race of SONS OF GOD who have been redeemed and cleansed from sin shall reign in eternal righteousness.

"Suffering and affliction, the results of the fall, are even carrying their

eternal benefits to those who are still in the world of sin. This is clearly indicated by Peter when he says, 'Whom resist in faith KNOWING THAT THE SAME AFFLICTIONS ARE ACCOMPLISHED IN YOUR BRETHREN THAT ARE IN THE WORLD.' 1 Peter 5:9. **I have long believed that God saves some first and teaches them after; but others, He teaches first and saves them after.** But every day God reaps an enormous harvest from mankind." —End quote

Therewith, we can see that it is essential for us to harbor this one assuring thought in our minds—WE ARE NOT OUR OWN. We were bought with a price, the price of Christ's own blood. We are a priceless possession, purchased by Him who paid with His life. Since He paid such a high cost to redeem us, He will not allow any of us to go unrefined. We are His prized workmanship with which He takes great care and pride. Not only do the cool breezes of life that He blows upon us help to form what we shall be, but each blaze of tormenting pain as well. They also serve to bring us to a very real, eternal weight of glory, a glory which will be revealed in His appointed time and season. It is then, as His full-grown sons, that we will sit and reign with Him in that refined glory. It is then that by His life we will bind up the broken hearted and bring peace to this hurting world.

Contrary to our desires otherwise and questions of ***why must we suffer so horribly***, we will not be spared the fiery trials and horrid afflictions. We are not destined to remain immature children playing forever around His throne. His love for us is too great to leave us in such childish immaturity. His love goes deep, as deep as the spear that pieced His side that fateful day of Redemption. He sealed throughout all eternity every soul in Himself. It displayed to creation the depth of His love for each of us. To believe that our Lord Jesus would let the hardships of life ravish our lives without merit, and for them to go unbalanced with the reward of unmeasured joy and happiness, is unthinkable.

He simply will not permit it! For **"A just weight and balance are the LORD'S: all the weights of the bag are His work." *Proverbs 16:11*.** Do you believe it? If you do, remember it the next time you feel that the load

on your shoulders is much too heavy to carry. When horrible maladies strike your body and linger for months or years upon end, glorious change is taking place. When people say all kinds of evil against you, it will make their lies much easier to bear when you keep it dear to your heart. You will know that when sin abounds, grace much more abounds! Our Lord will have it no other way!

Now, *let patience have her perfect work*; for as the English proverb states:

"Just when the caterpillar thought the world was over – it became a butterfly."

Elwin R. Roach

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