



# WHY DO THE RIGHTEOUS SUFFER ?

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## **Part I**

# **Paul's Thorn and 12 Reasons for Suffering**

## Introduction

This book is written as an answer to that difficult question which puzzles so many Christians, "Why do the righteous suffer?" Although it is true that it is the lot of the righteous to suffer in certain ways, notwithstanding it is evident that many Christians suffer unnecessarily. It is of extreme importance to understand what those things are that a Christian need not suffer. Otherwise he becomes an easy mark for the devil's attack.

The first chapter begins with the question of Paul's "thorn in the flesh." Here it is shown beyond controversy that his "thorn" was not sickness. In the second chapter, twelve causes are listed from which Christians suffer. In some of these ways we shall see that Christians suffer needlessly.

The troublesome case of Job is considered. As we study it we find the case is not as mysterious as is commonly supposed. We discover that there were definite reasons why Job suffered. Best of all, we find that Job after he had corrected these things, was healed and enjoyed good health for another 140 years!

## Chapter I

# Was Paul's Thorn in the Flesh Sickness?

Satan has long deprived many Christians from having faith for healing because he has told them that their affliction is a "thorn in the flesh" such as Paul had, and for this reason they cannot be healed. In this chapter is proof that Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was not sickness.

It is true that the Scriptures teach that **"they who will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer."** (II Timothy 3:12) Many read the last word of this verse to say "sickness." But if the reader will refer to the verse he will see that it says no such thing. It says they will suffer "persecution." Nevertheless from this false assumption, some teach that the righteous must also suffer from sickness and disease. To back up this contention they call attention to Paul's "thorn in the flesh" which they assert was a disease — supposedly a dreaded eye affliction which caused Paul to become almost blind.

The first law of sound reasoning is that one may not assume the thing which is to be proved. The Scriptures declare that Paul had a "thorn in the flesh." They also tell us that it was "a messenger from Satan" which came to buffet him. We further understand that Paul did not receive immediate deliverance from "this thorn in the flesh." But we ask, where does the Bible indicate that the term "thorn in the flesh" refers to disease? Even Scofield, an able expositor, but who often follows the traditional teaching, says regarding the supposed eye affliction of Paul:

"It has been conjectured that Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was chronic ophthalmia (a serious eye affliction ) inducing bodily weakness and a repulsive appearance. This cannot be positively known, and the reserve of Scripture is as sure a mark of inspiration as its revelations. Paul's particular thorn is not described that his consolations may avail for all to whom any thorn is given." (Scofield Bible)

Actually the evidence of the Scripture supplies abundant proof that Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was not sickness of any kind.

### **1. Paul's "THORN in the Flesh" Was Given Because of Great Revelations**

Many sick persons are prone to compare themselves to Paul in the matter of his "thorn in the flesh." But they should note the reason why he received it. Paul said it was given **"lest I should be exalted above measure**

**through the abundance of the revelations."** (II Cor. 12:7) Now the obvious fact is that most of the people who claim to have a "thorn in the flesh" have received no notable revelations as Paul. Many of them do not even know the Scriptures on Divine Healing. Far from having received any great revelation that would necessitate a "thorn in the flesh" they pay little heed to the revelations already given. They take little note of those great promises such as Psalms 103:2,3 which declare **"Bless the Lord O my soul and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases."** Nor of Matt. 8:16,17: **"And he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick; That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses."** Or the promise, **"By His stripes ye were healed."**

Paul was caught up into the third heaven. He saw amazing things and naturally desired to relate them on his return to earth. This however was not granted. Because of the abundance of the revelations he was given a "thorn in the flesh" to keep him from becoming unduly exalted.

## **2. What Does the Bible Say a "THORN in the Flesh" Is?**

It is always wise to allow the Scriptures to explain themselves. The above phrase evidently is figurative and not a literal "thorn." We shall see in the Scriptures that in every case, the term "thorn in the flesh" is used to indicate persecution by wicked persons and not diseases. In Numbers 33:55, Moses said:

**"If ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein you dwell."**

Joshua speaking at a later time used the term in the same way: **"They shall be scourges in your sides and thorns in your eyes."** (Joshua 23:13) Again in Judges 2:3, the Lord speaks of the Canaanites as "thorns in your sides." We see therefore that according to the Scriptures a "thorn in the flesh" is not a disease but a *personality* whom the devil uses to annoy or persecute the children of God.

If we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture then the matter should be forever settled as to what the Bible means when it speaks of a "thorn in the flesh."

### **3. Did Paul Infer in Any Way That His "THORN in The Flesh" Was Blindness Or Some Kind Of Sickness?**

In the very passage of Scripture where Paul speaks of his "thorn in the flesh" he refers to it as an infirmity or infirmities. He says:

**"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak then am I strong." (II Cor. 12:10)**

Paul lists his infirmities here as necessities, persecutions and distresses. In the preceding 11th chapter, he makes a long list of these infirmities and distresses:

1. Labors more abundant.
2. In stripes above measure.
3. In prisons more frequent.
4. In deaths oft.
5. Five times received I forty stripes save one.
6. Thrice was I beaten with rods.
7. Once was I stoned.
8. Thrice I suffered shipwreck.
9. A night and a day have I been in the deep.
10. In journeyings oft.
11. In perils of waters.
12. In perils of robbers.
13. In perils by my own countrymen.
14. In perils by the heathen.
15. In perils in the city.
16. In perils in the wilderness.
17. In perils in the sea.
18. In perils among false brethren.
19. In weariness and painfulness.
20. In watchings often.
21. In hunger and thirst.
22. In fastings often.
23. In cold and nakedness.

Notice that with the exception of the natural hardships encountered in those days in the preaching of the gospel, almost all the troubles Paul listed have to do with persecution either by the heathen or by false brethren.

These men inspired by Satan raged against him, beating him, stoning him, putting him in prison, subjecting him to hunger and thirst and every kind of persecution. At one time he had been shielded from much of this persecution, but during his later years, God allowed the full force of it to come against him, insomuch that at times he even despaired of his life. At least twice he spent a term of years in prison.

But notice! Not once does he list sickness among his infirmities. Not once does he list a single disease. Nowhere does he mention cancer or tuberculosis or any other physical affliction. It thus would appear to be pure invention to say that Paul's infirmities included blindness or some kind of disease.

#### **4. Why Do Some Insist That Paul's Infirmary Was Blindness?**

The answer is that it is purely the tradition of men. Actually to say that Paul was blind is a direct denial of the Scriptures. It is true that Paul did become blind at the time he saw the vision of Christ on the Damascus road. However we are told that after this Paul spent three days and nights in prayer and fasting. At that time Ananias came in and laid his hands upon him that he might receive the Holy Ghost and his sight. *And the Scriptures say that he did receive sight.* (Acts 9:18) Consequently to hold to a tradition that Paul was almost blind is to go directly against the Scripture.

#### **5. Did Paul Consider Blindness a Blessing or a Curse?**

Paul infers that his infirmities were a blessing in disguise. Did he consider blindness a blessing or was it a curse? Blindness had indeed struck him as he approached Damascus with threatenings and slaughter against the Christians living there. But after his proud heart had been subdued, he regained his sight. Did God then send blindness on him this time as a blessing? The Old Testament declared that blindness was a curse that would come on the disobedient. (Deut. 28:28) Was it now to become a blessing?

Paul believed no such thing. He knew that blindness was a curse. When the false prophet, one Bar-Jesus, sought to withstand Paul from preaching the Gospel in Paphos, the apostle turned to the sorcerer, and said:

**"O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now behold the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind not seeing the sun for a season." (Acts 13:10, 11)**

From this incident it will be seen that Paul regarded blindness as a curse and not a blessing.



## **6. Did Paul Ever Teach People That Sickness Was a Blessing?**

Paul did no such thing. He went about as Jesus teaching and preaching healing of body and soul. Great miracles took place as the result of his ministry. On the other hand he showed that sickness came upon Christians because they did not judge themselves and because they did not discern the Lord's body:

**"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we judge ourselves we shall not be judged." (I Cor. 11:29-31)**

From this we see that Paul did not teach that people were to regard sickness as some special providence from God because they were spiritual. Rather it came because they had not discerned the Lord's body and because they had not judged themselves.

## **7. Is There Any Evidence that Paul Had Faith for Healing for Others But Not for Himself Because the Lord Had Sent Sickness On Him as a "THORN in the Flesh"?**

We find no case of Paul's being physically afflicted except when he became blind as a result of the dazzling light of the vision. He fasted and prayed three days and nights and was healed.

There was one case where Paul was apparently slain as a result of a stoning by a wicked mob of persecutors who were intent in bringing a halt to his ministry. While sorrowing disciples stood about his body, suddenly they saw a movement. As they watched, supernatural power seemed to enter the apostle's body. His startled followers saw him rise up, apparently completely restored. He was able to walk back with his friends into the city. (Acts 14:19-20)

As long as Paul lived, he trusted in Christ as his Healer. There was no diminishing of his faith in God for healing, even in his last years. In the final chapter of the Book of Acts when Paul, after escaping from the wrecked ship, reached land, he was attacked by a poisonous viper which had coiled around his hand. The natives supposed that he would suddenly fall down dead. But Paul trusting in the Great Physician, felt no harm. The fact is that Paul as long as he lived took the Lord as his Healer.

## **8. Did Paul Act Like a Sick Man?**

Paul suffered many infirmities and privations, but he was able to endure them because he had a strong body. A sick person is a poor soul-winner. A

physically afflicted person requires the services of the church instead of serving it. Only a well person could evangelize the nations as Paul did. His testimony was **"I laboured more abundantly than they all."** That is not the testimony of a sick man. If Paul's disease resulted in his becoming the most fruitful of all who laboured in his day, then we could well wish that kind of sickness upon all the people of God.

SUMMED UP, we see from the life of Paul that the righteous suffer for the Gospel's sake. Paul deliberately chose a grinding life of toil and hardship that the Gospel might be brought to the lost. He counted the loss of all things gain that he might win Christ, and share with Him in the glory of the firstfruit resurrection. But he did not suffer from sickness and disease. It is a snare and a delusion to read sickness into Paul's "thorn in the flesh." To do so will only weaken one's faith and make of noneffect the promises of the word of God which declare that **"he forgiveth all our iniquities and healeth all our diseases."**

## **Chapter II**

### **Twelve Reasons Why the Righteous Suffer**

In the previous chapter we learned that Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was not sickness. We saw however, that Paul suffered in other ways. We shall now consider the various ways and circumstances in which the righteous suffer. As we observe closely we shall find that the followers of Jesus may not avoid all suffering—some of it will be their lot, or shall we say their privilege to bear. For if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with Him. On the other hand the devil takes advantage of many Christians to make them suffer unnecessarily. A knowledge of these things is very important to the believer, for certainly there is no virtue in suffering for the sake of suffering.

#### **1. Abraham Suffered Because of an Ill-Advised Marriage**

God promised Abraham that he would become a father of many nations. But Sarah his wife was barren and the couple were without a child. Abraham did not want God's promise to fail, so he thought he would help God out. At the suggestion of Sarah he took Hagar his wife's handmaid in marriage. She bore him Ishmael. Later the true heir, Isaac, was born. As the children grew up they began to quarrel, and Abraham saw his home being turned into a place of contention. Ishmael jealous of Isaac mocked and persecuted him. This excited the indignation of Sarah. On one occasion, Hagar fled from her mistress, but the angel of the Lord met her and bade her return. However as Isaac grew older the contention became so sharp that it was necessary to send the bondwoman and her son away. This caused Abraham who dearly loved Ishmael, no little grief. Nonetheless the situation had become so aggravated that there was apparently no other solution to the problem.

There are many today who suffer for the same reason that Abraham did. They fail to take God into consideration in the matter of their marriage. To marry in haste may later mean to repent at leisure. John Wesley, the apostle of the Eighteenth Century suffered untold mental anguish because of the conduct of an ill-tempered spouse who went so far as to slander him in public. Of the many reasons for which the righteous suffer, marriages out of

the will of God contracted by people who are ill-mated, perhaps head the list. It is worthy of note to observe that Abraham, father of the faithful, suffered for this reason.

## **2. Some of the Righteous Suffer for Wild Oats Sown in Their Youth**

Jacob was a godly man. The Lord revealed Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Yet Jacob suffered as few men suffered. Why? Because he had recklessly sown wild oats in his youth. Many people fail to heed the law of sowing and reaping. They suppose that because God forgives all sin, he also cancels the effects of all sin. But this is not always possible. Manasseh, king of Judah, repented of his years of evil, and God forgave him. Nevertheless, we are told that because of the sins of Manasseh, the whole nation went into captivity. (II Kings 23:26)

Duplicity and deception marked the career of Jacob during his youth. He deceived his father Isaac into blessing him when he killed a goat and made a savoury meat for his father, also putting the skins on his hands so they would be hairy like his brother Esau's hands. Later Jacob's own sons were to deceive him by *killing a goat* and dipping Joseph's coat in its blood, thereby making their father think that Joseph was dead. Jacob sorrowed and could not be comforted. He said "**I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning.**" The patriarch began to reap the harvest of his evil years, even though at Peniel he had wrestled with an angel and had prayed through, so that the angel told him that he should henceforth be called Israel, a prince with God. Many righteous people suffer for their sins committed in their youth.

Although Job was a righteous man, he was not always so. He had evidently been careless in his youth. He associates some of his suffering with the sins of his youth. He may also have been thinking of his ill-fated marriage in his youth to a woman who now in the time of his adversity had told him to curse God and die:

**"For thou writest bitter things against me to possess the iniquities of my youth." (Job 13:26)**

## **3. Saints Who Suffer Through Hasty Action**

Every man hopes to see the consummation of his work. At the age of forty it had been the ambition of Moses to deliver his people from the Egyptians. His plan failed and he became a fugitive from the land of Egypt. His brethren at that time had been unable to understand that God had called him to deliver the children of Israel. (Acts 7:25). Then one day forty years

later, God appeared to him in the Burning Bush. With a mighty hand God used Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. For another forty years the children of Israel because of selfwill, wandered in the wilderness. Then at last the order came to march. Israel was to cross over the Jordan! But just as success was within his grasp, God told Moses that he could not go over, that he must die on the other side of Jordan.

What had gone wrong that caused Moses to miss the prize for which he had been laboring for eighty years? It was a hasty ill-advised action! Moses, distracted by the people who were demanding water in the wilderness, said, **"Hear now ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?"** (Numbers 20:10). Then he smote the rock which was a type of Christ *who* was only to be smitten once. The Lord told Moses that because he sanctified Him not before the eyes of the people, he would not be permitted to bring the Children of Israel into the land of Canaan.

Thus may one hasty action cause a man of God untold grief and deprive him of the prize for which he has laboured long.

#### **4. Members of the Body of Christ Suffer When Other Members Suffer**

Paul spoke of the Church as being many members of one body — the Body of Christ. When one member suffers the other members suffer with it. **"And whether one member suffers all the members suffer with it."** (I Cor. 12:26). It is in the nature of things that the righteous must suffer when others suffer. Like Christ, the members of His body feel the infirmities of others. A mother suffers when her child is in pain. A father suffers with a son who has gotten into trouble, though the trouble be entirely the result of his son's own carelessness. So those of the Church being members of one body, are touched with the infirmities of each of its members, even though sometimes they suffer as the result of their own foolishness.

There is another phase of the Church's suffering. Sin in the Body of Christ can bring sorrow and shame to other members. Sometimes it may bring suffering and loss. Such was the case of Joshua and the children of Israel when they entered Canaan. God had given specific orders that the city of Jericho should be destroyed by fire, and that no one was to lay a hand on the spoil of this accursed city.

But Achan coveted the Babylonish garment and the wedge of gold and took and hid them under his tent. The result of this flagrant act was that the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies. (Joshua 7). Thus we see that innocent people may suffer with the guilty when sin enters the

congregation of the Lord. The lesson is that the Church must be vigilant and prayerful that evil does not find lodging within her borders. When sin becomes unrestrained in a church, much suffering may result even among the innocent.

### **5. The Righteous Often Suffer Because of Those Who Fail God**

The story of Saul, King of Israel, is one of the saddest found in the Scriptures. At the beginning of his reign his conduct seems to promise a prosperous and successful career. Yet hidden in his character was an unsuspected streak of pride and self-will. His disobedience and presumptuous intrusion into the priest's office made it necessary for God to reject him as king. This brought great sorrow to Samuel who despite a warning from God, had dared to hope that the first king of Israel might prove his worth. When God told the prophet that it repented him that He had made Saul, king, **"it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the Lord all night."** (I Sam. 15:11). Although Samuel carried the message of his rejection to Saul, he did so with deep grief of heart. He never saw Saul again. Sorrowfully he went to his house grieving over the one who had failed God. **"And Samuel came no more unto Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul."** (I Sam. 15:35). Thus do the righteous suffer when men who show great promise in the Christian walk are disobedient and fall away from God. Jesus suffered because of Judas. His own familiar friend that He had trusted and with whom He had **"sweet counsel,"** betrayed Him and went to a suicide's grave. (Psa. 55:2-14).

### **6. David Suffered Because of Flagrant Sin**

Most of the righteous suffer, not because of some great sin they have committed but for other causes. Yet there are certain of God's people whose life in many respects has been most exemplary, but who have through an act committed in an hour of indiscretion, virtually ruined their lives. There are some mistakes that men make which can be overlooked and forgotten. There are other things that men may do that can cause them to suffer for the rest of their lives. Every time they think of what they have done, they feel the sharp pangs of remorse. These people do not necessarily go to hell at death, thanks to God's mercy, but nevertheless, there are times when they suffer the pangs of hell while they are yet living.

Such was the case of David, Israel's greatest king. His reign in most respects was in sharp contrast to that of Saul. The story of David is replete

with incidents in which he manifested remarkable fortitude and wisdom even under the severest trial. In his earlier years he showed unusual courage and bravery. He slew the giant when all Israel quailed before his blasphemous boasts. His religious convictions were deep. Even in his youth he manifested an exceptional faith in God. Especially anointed of God, he was not only a king but a prophet who wrote many of the most beautiful of the Psalms. God so highly regarded David that He spoke of him as a "man after God's own heart," and gave him a covenant in which He swore by Himself that David would never lack a man to sit on the throne of Israel forever.

But, alas, in an evil hour, David committed his great sin. While others were in battle, David was idle. Temptation was thrust before him. As many others, he dallied with it until he yielded. He committed the sin of adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, who was one of his most faithful officers. Then he compounded his sin by conniving in Uriah's murder.

God forgave him it is true. To David's credit he did not deny his sin when Nathan pointed his finger at him and said, "Thou art the man." Great was his remorse as he realized the enormity of his crime, and he bitterly repented for his wrongdoing, as is revealed by his confession in the 51st Psalm.

Nevertheless, David spent the rest of his life paying for his sin. God said to David, **"Behold I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house ... for thou didst it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun."** (II Sam. 12:11-12). And thus it came to pass. David **"the man after God's own heart"** never saw peace again during his lifetime.

Soon after, his son, Amnon, committed a crime against his own sister. Absalom in revenge murdered Amnon. Then Absalom led a revolt which ended in the young man's death, causing the king to make his lamentable cry, **"O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom my son, my son."** (II Sam. 18:33). Not long after this Sheba headed another revolt which led to bloodshed before it was put down. Following that came a three year famine. Still later a plague swept through the land taking many lives. Finally just before David's death another son, Adonijah, plotted to usurp the throne, which act ultimately resulted in Adonijah's execution. David, in the Scriptures, is spoken of as a

righteous man. The blood of the Saviour, of whose coming David prophesied, covered his sin. But alas how much he suffered for that one act! So likewise do many other of the righteous suffer because of one evil hour when they foolishly yielded to temptation and indulged in a forbidden act of which they thought no one would know, but which ultimately God allowed to be uncovered before all. Some may suppose that under grace God does not chasten his people, but Jesus in Rev. 3:19 says **"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore and repent."**

#### **7. Asa Suffered Because He Trusted in Physicians Rather Than God**

Asa was one of the kings of Judah who for many years served God with all of his heart. His story opens with these words, **"And Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God."** (II Chron. 14:2). He put out of the land all strange gods. He broke down their images. He even removed his mother from being queen because of her idolatry.

The king of Ethiopia with a mighty army marched against him. Asa's soldiers were no match for this great host. But Asa put his trust in the Lord and cried out to Him. God answered and the multitude that came against the king were overthrown. Asa instituted a great religious reform in his day, and caused his people to enter into a covenant to seek the Lord **"with all their heart and with all their soul."**

But alas, toward the end of his reign, Asa became careless. He no longer completely relied upon the Lord as he had done formerly. He began to grow cold in his experience. When a prophet warned him, he flew into a rage and had him shut up in prison. Not long after he became diseased in his feet. Instead of looking to the Lord, Asa put his trust in the physicians. No doubt doctors have their place in the order of things. But Asa was out of the will of God and he was no longer relying on God as he had once done. The disease of his feet steadily became worse until he suffered intensely. Not long after that, he died. Why did Asa the righteous man suffer? Why did he not get healed? Because he trusted in man rather than God. **"And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceedingly great: yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord; but to the physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers...."** (II Chron. 16:12-13).

#### **8. All Who Will Live Godly Suffer Persecution**

The apostle Paul has declared that all who will live godly shall suffer persecution. **"Yea and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer**



**persecution."** (II Tim. 3:12). The reason for this is that the righteous are a continual rebuke to the wicked. They who delight in wrong doing must either reform their ways or else in selfdefense war against those whose manner of living reproach their own evil ways. Thus it has always been.

When Joseph carried to his father Jacob, a report of the evil deeds of his brethren, it incurred their hatred to the extent that they sought to put him out of the way.

John the Baptist angered the spiteful Herodias because he had rebuked her for her illicit marriage with Herod. Her wrath was not satisfied until she had John the Baptist beheaded.

The three Hebrew children refused to bow down to the golden image and because of their refusal they were thrown into the fiery furnace. Daniel insisted on making petitions to his God and forthwith he was cast into the lion's den, though both he and his friends, the three Hebrew children, received a marvelous deliverance. Christ our supreme example suffered at the hands of wicked men who hated Him and put Him to death because their deeds were evil.

It is the lot of the righteous to suffer persecution in this world, even as was that of Christ their Master:

**"Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept my sayings, they will keep yours also." (John 15:20).**

Notwithstanding there are cases where Christians suffer because of their own faults. There is no particular glory in suffering patiently for that which one has brought on himself. It is when men do well and then suffer that it is considered of great virtue in the eyes of *God*:

**"For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted with your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." (I Peter 2:20).**

And so has the apostle Paul spoken of a reward for faithfulness in suffering for Christ. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." (II Tim. 2:12).

### **9. The Righteous Suffer When They Neglect Prayer**

Against us at all times is the adversary who as in the days of Job watches for an opening through which he can strike a blow at the righteous. Through various and often subtle temptations, he seeks to lead them astray.

If they even for a short time depend on their own strength there is grave danger that they will succumb to some evil. Their only safety is in continuously living a life of prayer and communion with God. Jesus said that men ought always to pray and not to faint. (Luke 18:1). Especially is this true in these last days. We have been forewarned that at the time of the end, the devil will come down with great wrath, knowing that his time is short. Jesus has warned us concerning this time saying:

**"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the son of man." (Luke 21:36).**

The implication is that if Christians let up on watching and praying, temptation will come and Satan will get the upper hand. This is what happened to Peter when he committed the greatest mistake of his life. As a result of his sad failure during the trial of his Master in Pilate's Judgment Hall, he experienced bitter remorse. Tradition tells us that at the time of his death, Peter was crucified upside down. But physical suffering, great as it might appear, could not compare with the soul anguish Peter suffered when he came to the realization that he had denied his Lord. No doubt Peter long afterward felt sorrow and shame whenever the painful memory came to his mind of how he failed his Lord.

How did it happen? Peter never had the slightest intention to do such a thing. He vehemently insisted that he was willing to die for the Lord. But panic came and before he realized it, the deed was done.

The trouble was caused because Peter was not praying when the supreme attack of the devil came. Satan had taken up his headquarters in the disciples' midst in the person of Judas. Jesus had said of the powers of evil, **"This is your hour, and the power of darkness."** (Luke 22:53). But Peter failed to take warning. While Jesus wrestled in agony of conflict, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he and the other disciples fell asleep. Jesus went over to where the disciples were and said, **"Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."** (Luke 22:46). But the warning was to no avail. Consequently Peter was unprepared for the swiftly developing drama of the arrest of Jesus and His trial in the judgment hall of Pilate.

Peter suffered as greatly as any person who loves the Lord can suffer. He had denied his Lord. When he came to himself he went out and wept bitterly. But Peter is not the only one who has suffered because he failed to pray. Many Christians today are suffering because they fail to do this very

thing. They let up on their prayer life and as a result, Satan gets the advantage.

The remedy is to do what Peter did. From that time forward, after his sad experience in denying the Lord, Peter as well as the other apostles had a regularly established hour of prayer. It is interesting to note that there was another occasion when the soldiers came to arrest the disciples, but this time they were prepared. When the Sanhedrin commanded them not to preach in the name of Jesus, Peter no longer fearful, boldly replied:

**"Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.**

**For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."**  
(Acts 4:19,20).

#### **10. Some of the Righteous Suffer Because They Go Beyond Their Strength**

From time to time our attention is called to cases in which the most consecrated people seem unable to get healing for their body. For example, there is a pastor's wife, who though she has sacrificed much for the Gospel, does not seem to be able to get relief from a chronic condition. As far as can be determined, her life is beyond reproach. Yet she has suffered for years and still continues to suffer. In such cases the question is asked again and again, "Why do the righteous suffer?" "Why does this good woman suffer?"

And yet the answer is not too difficult. The woman went beyond her physical strength. She carried a heavier burden than she was able to bear, or God expected her to bear. Responsibility pressed on her until she neared the breaking point. There is a limit to human strength. If pressed beyond that limit the mechanism of the body will break down.

Thus was the case of Epaphroditus, Paul's companion. (The original Greek shows him to be an apostle although not one of the original twelve.) Paul wrote the Philippians that Epaphroditus had been sick. Why was he sick? Simply because he had overdone, although his labors had been in the sacred cause of Christ:

**"For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him; not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.... Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward us." (Phil. 2:26,27,30).**

Here was a godly man who had been ill unto death. He recovered by the barest margin. What was the cause? Why had he suffered? Why had he endured such an illness? Not because he had broken any moral law. But he had broken a physical law. He had gone beyond his strength though in the greatest of causes. It appears that the Philippian church had failed to properly support Paul while in his labors with them. Epaphroditus saw the need and labored beyond his strength to make up the lack. But it was too much for him. He broke down and for a while lingered between life and death. It was not the matter of being healed from a disease. Epaphroditus had depleted his nervous energy and as a result became gravely ill. A prayer-line was not what he needed. Paul who had the gift of miracles was there to pray for him, but no miracle of healing took place. He needed rest. God did answer prayer by protecting him from death. However, Epaphroditus apparently required an extended period of convalescence.

Similar situations happen times without number in these days. Many ministers, Christian workers and their wives go beyond their strength. Perhaps if they prayed more and worried less, they would have lasted longer. At any rate, they went beyond their nervous reserve, and then found it necessary to spend months, sometimes years, in recuperation. Perhaps it is of this class that people most often raise the question, "Why do the righteous suffer?" The answer is so simple it is overlooked. They had limited strength and went beyond what they had. They suffer as one who suffers who overdraws his bank account. It is folly to blame God for this. It is a simple case of cause and effect.

### **11. The Righteous Suffer in Resisting Sin**

It is no secret that to successfully resist sin sometimes requires suffering. The easy way is to yield to it, to follow the course of least resistance. Yet Christ set us an example of resisting the works of the flesh even if it calls for suffering:

**"Who in the day of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of salvation unto all of them that obey him." (Hebrews 5:7-9).**

Notice that Christ suffered in the flesh while resisting evil. He met the challenge with **"prayers and supplications with strong cryings and**

**tears."** Christ never sinned, but having humbled Himself, He became flesh, and had to learn the way to perfection by things which He suffered.

Jesus while at home was misunderstood by His brethren. They did not believe in Him. They thought His claims were mere pretensions. He could not help but have suffered from this misunderstanding, but it never swerved Him from His chosen course.

Jesus was a **"man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."** He did not need to be a man of sorrows, but He chose to share the sorrows of those whom He came to save. The grief of Mary and Martha, for instance, moved Him to tears. Jesus shared the infirmities of those who are members of this forlorn race. Having shared their infirmities, He is able to succour them who come to Him.

Even so His followers who have partaken of the infirmities of those going through trial and testing, likewise are able to help them.

It is in suffering that the Christian secures an eternal victory over sin, even as the Apostle Peter has said:

**"Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for *he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.*" (I Peter 4:1).**

Jesus told His followers that the way of a believer was one of self-denial. **"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."**

(Matt. 16:24). One does not become a Christian so that he can become wealthy, or lead a life of ease. Indeed, no. He is a soldier of the cross, ready to endure hardship. Ready to serve not himself, but to take orders from his heavenly Captain.

It costs something to be a Christian. Christ told His disciples to count the cost. He related the parable of the king who debated whether to go to battle with only half as many soldiers as his adversary. He spoke of the man that planned a tower, but who first sat down and counted the cost to see whether he had sufficient to finish it. So likewise He told His followers to count the cost, and not to start the race unless they were ready to finish it.

To those who win the race, the reward is great. They who suffer with Him shall also reign with Him. After Jesus had given the commandment of self-denial, He then gave a statement of profit and loss. Regarding the world's most successful man, Jesus said, **"What shall it profit (him) if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"** (Matt. 16:26). But for those

who deny themselves and follow Him, there would, when the King returned, be the promise of great reward:

**"For the son of man shall come in the glory of the Father with his angels; and then shall he reward every man according to his works." (Matt. 16:27).**

We have now considered eleven different reasons which result in the Christian's suffering, certain of which (such as persecution) he may not escape. Of some of these causes of suffering, it is certain that it is not the will of God that the Christian should be the victim. There are cases, however, in which there seems to be an element of mystery involved, as to why the individual is not delivered. Such is that of Job who represents the twelfth class of believers who suffer, and whom we will now consider. In studying the circumstances of his affliction, we shall more fully learn the answer to the question, "Why do the righteous suffer?"

The case of Job is so important that we have reserved the second section of this book for its consideration.

## **Part II**

# **Why Did Job Suffer?**

## Chapter I

### The Trial of Job

Let us get this straight from the beginning. Job far from being a sinner, was a godly man of sterling character. God spoke of him as a righteous man. The Bible says he **"was perfect and upright"** and one that **"feared God and eschewed evil."** (Job 1:1). That there might not be any mistake in this estimate of Job, it may be noted that God Himself in His conversation with Satan called the devil's attention to Job's upright character.

**"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?" (Job 1:8).**

God's endorsement of Job's integrity could scarcely be stronger. The man was upright, he feared God, he hated evil. God spoke of him as a perfect man and that there was **"none like him on the earth."** With these words, God made it clear that Job was not afflicted because there was some hidden evil in his life.

There were other excellent qualities in Job's character. Some Christians may lead a pious life themselves, but they have no spiritual solicitude for their family. Not so with Job. He sensed that his children were inclined to be worldly, and so he rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: **"for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually."** (Job 1:5).

Job was exemplary in his conduct toward his fellowmen.

#### **Why Did Job Suffer?**

Unlike many rich men who are indifferent and without compassion on the less fortunate, Job was always ready to lend a helping hand where help was needed. In his discourse with his three friends, he called them to witness that the poor had often blessed him for his kindness to them.

**"Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessings of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing with joy. I put on righteousness and it clothed me; my judgment was as a robe and**



**a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor; and the cause which I knew not I searched out." (Job 29:12-16).**

This was Job's answer to his three friends when they sought to charge that he suffered because of misconduct. They were unable to refute his claims for they knew they were true.

Under severe trial Job stood true. Faced with utter disaster, the loss of his children, the destruction of his property, his own physical suffering from a loathsome and painful disease, he nevertheless retained his faith in God. **"In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."**

All this brings us to the age-long question "Why do the righteous suffer?" Here was Job whom God called a perfect man, even saying "there is none like him in the earth." Yet he was afflicted and suffered grievously. Why did this happen? Why did righteous Job suffer? Why do other saints suffer? Yes, the problem is, why do the righteous suffer?

Since it is evident that the righteous do suffer, another question that naturally follows is: Who causes them to suffer?

## Chapter II

### Does God Cause the Righteous to Suffer?

Is God the agent in the suffering of the righteous? Was it the hand of God that brought trouble on Job? Was it God that sent the whirlwind that took the lives of his children? Was it His touch that caused a vile disease to attack the body of Job? In seeking the answer to the question, "Why do the righteous suffer?", it is necessary for us to determine who the real agent is that causes the suffering.

It is remarkable to observe how universal opinion has been, that God was the one that caused Job's troubles. Job's friends and enemies seemed to agree on one thing—that God was the author of his sufferings. Even Job believed this to be true. He lamented in (Job 1:21). **"The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."**

Job believed that God had afflicted him without cause although he conceded that God as a sovereign had the right to do as He pleased:

**"For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplied my wounds without cause."** (Job 9:17). Since Job believed that God was responsible for his misery and wretchedness, he was desirous that God would take his life altogether:

**"O that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off."** (Job 6:9-10).

#### **Job's Wife Believed God Was Responsible**

Job's wife also believed that God was responsible for her husband's misfortunes. She was indignant that he still retained his faith. Her advice to him was to **"curse God and die."** (Job 2:9). Although Job agreed with his wife that the calamity had come from God, yet he would not go along with her blasphemous suggestion that he curse God. He maintained that God had the right to put disease upon him to make him suffer. Job was unwilling to blame God, but justified it as His right to do what He would.

#### **Messenger Who Brought News of Calamity Blamed God**

The man who brought Job the first news of the calamity that came upon him believed that God was responsible for what had happened. He said that

God had sent fire down out of heaven and burned up his 7000 sheep:

**"While he was yet speaking there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee." (Job 1:16).**

**Job's Friends Believed God was Responsible and Told Job God was Punishing Him for His Sins**

Job's friends were all convinced that Job had committed some outbroken sin and God was punishing him through calamity and sickness. Zophar considered Job a hypocrite and called on him to repent:

**"Should thy lies make men hold their peace? And when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?**

***... Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.... If iniquity be in thine hand put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles."* (Job 11:3,6,14).**

Eliphaz contended likewise; he believed that the wounds that Job had received had come from God:

**"Behold happy is the man that God correcteth: therefore despise not the chastening of the Almighty:**

**For he maketh sore and bindeth up; he woundeth and his hands make whole." (Job 5:17-18).**

The eighth chapter of Job shows that Bildad believed the same thing. That Job had sinned and that if he would but repent, God would heal and restore him. Elihu, another character in the book, who reveals a superior and loftier reasoning than his contemporaries, also appears to agree that God had laid his hands upon Job for some reason.

**The Devil in Agreement With This Reasoning**

Last of all the devil seems to be quite in agreement with the conclusion reached by the characters in the Book of Job. Satan appears to have sought to hide his responsibility or that he had anything to do with Job's sickness. Perhaps the devil was aware that this drama might some day be put on record. Whether this is correct or not, notice the cunning way the devil challenged God. He said, in effect, **"God, so far you have not touched Job's body; now put forth your hand and touch his flesh, and he will curse thee to Thy face."** The devil did not say, "God, let me put disease on him." Satan apparently wanted to avoid the inference that he was the cause of sickness and disease. Therefore he said, "God, you make him sick." But

is that what actually happened? Was it God or the devil that brought sickness upon Job?

## Chapter III

### Did The Lord Send Disease Upon Job?

As we have seen, both Job's friends and his enemies seemed to take for granted that it was God who sent the affliction on Job. Is this correct, or was Satan actually the author of the disease? In order to properly answer the question, "Why do the righteous suffer?", we must establish the fact as to who the author of disease is. Is sickness from God or from the devil?

It is true that the general teaching of the church in the past has been that God is the author of disease. Like Job's reply to his wife, it has been taught almost as gospel truth that sickness comes from God. Job said, **"What, shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"** Nevertheless we must emphasize that this is not Bible teaching. *Jesus taught that disease and sickness came directly from Satan!*

#### **What Jesus Taught Concerning the Cause of Sickness**

Jesus went into a synagogue on a Sabbath day, and there was a woman there who was bowed with a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years. The case was so serious that she was bowed together and unable to lift herself up. When Jesus saw her pitiable condition He laid His hands upon her and immediately she was made straight. The ruler of the synagogue was filled with indignation over what he considered was a violation of the Sabbath. But the Lord rebuked him sharply, pronouncing him a hypocrite and remarking that he would lead his animal to watering on the Sabbath, but begrudged healing on that day for a woman who had been bound by the devil for eighteen years. Thus did Jesus reveal who was the real author of disease — it was Satan.

**"And ought not this woman being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from her bond on the Sabbath day?" (Luke 13:16).**

Throughout the Gospel record, we see Jesus, again and again, attributing sickness to the devil. He cast out the spirits of disease. He showed that deafness and dumbness were caused by evil spirits. He attributed blindness to the work of Satan. (Matt. 12:22).

#### **Peter's Statement Concerning Sickness and Satan**

Peter, who was one of Jesus' foremost disciples, understood sickness and disease to be caused by Satan. When he preached in the house of Cornelius, he mentioned Christ's ministry of healing.

**"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed with the devil; for God was with him." (Acts 10:38).**

Here Peter definitely links sickness with the work of Satan.

Old Testament teaching associates sickness with the work of evil spirits. Saul was oppressed with an evil spirit. When David ministered unto him in the spirit of worship, the evil spirit left him and **"Saul was refreshed and was well."** (I Sam. 16:23).

In view of all this evidence, is it possible that Job and his friends were correct in believing that sickness came directly from the hand of God? Job was a good man. He had suffered much. He had lost about everything but his faith in God. Yet, apparently he was unwilling to believe that his affliction had come from Satan. Somehow the thought was unacceptable to him.

Nonetheless we are not left in doubt about the matter. The inspired writer of the Book of Job takes the reader behind the scenes and shows him exactly what actually happened.

God had said to the devil, **"Hast thou considered my servant Job?"** He went on to point out to the devil that there was **"none like him on the earth,"** perfect, upright, one who feared God and hated evil. And the devil had answered, **"Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life."** Said he, if God would **"touch his bone and his flesh he will curse thee to thy face."** (Job 2:5). *The devil apparently wanted to give the impression that it was God that put sickness on people.* Today Satan is still engaged in sending forth this lie — that God does his dirty work.

But God exposed the devil. He did not want that lie to gain credence. In the first two chapters of the Book of Job (which is considered to be the first book of the Bible to be written), God has recorded who is the real author of sickness. He wanted it put in plain words so that there would be no excuse for anyone not knowing who was the author of disease, just as in the first chapters of Genesis God revealed who was the author of sin—in both cases it was the devil, the father of lies. God exposed the devil's part in sickness and disease.

**"So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown." Job 2:7.**

Could anything be plainer? Satan was not only the author of disease, but according to the first chapter, the devil was the one that brought all the other calamities and misfortunes upon Job. Satan is the author of sickness. It is important to know this if we are to understand and solve the great question, "Why do the righteous suffer?"

### **Sickness a Captivity**

Notice also that the sickness of Job was called a "captivity." Satan takes the bodies of people captive in the same way as their souls. (Job 42:10).

## **Chapter IV**

# **Why Does God Permit Sickness to Come Upon His People?**

Since sickness is associated in the minds of God's people with affliction, there is another question which must be answered before we can solve the problem of "Why do the righteous suffer?" The question is this: Granted that sickness comes from Satan, yet nevertheless it is yet to be explained why God permits it to come upon His people. If God has all power, why will He permit it to come upon them? If God has all power, why will He permit Satan to place evil afflictions upon His people as happened in the case of Job?

This question is not as hard to answer as it sounds, although it seems to be a great stumbling block and difficulty to many people. The fact is that if we challenged God's providence in this matter, we should be placed in the position of challenging almost the whole providence of God in His dealings with the human race.

If God is all powerful, why did He allow sin to enter the world?

Why did He allow Satan to tempt Eve in the Garden of Eden resulting in the fall of the human race?

Why did God allow Cain to murder righteous Abel?

Why did God allow evil to spread over the world to the extent that it has?

Why did God permit wicked men to take the lives of His prophets?

Why did God permit Jezebel to establish Baal worship in Israel, after destroying the prophets of the Lord?

Why did God allow many innocent children to lose their lives by the hand of Herod at the time of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem?

Why did God allow the wicked Jews to take the life of Stephen?

Why did God permit Nero to unjustly blame the Christians for the burning of Rome, thereby causing multitudes to perish through his false accusations?

These questions as a rule are not stumbling blocks to Christians, because the events are too far removed from them in point of time. It is



those things that immediately and personally effect the individual which causes him to raise questions as to the wisdom of God's dealings.

The fact is that God permits many things to happen that are not according to His will. An engineer who builds a bridge over a river for the benefit of the citizens of the land cannot be held responsible if someone chooses to commit suicide by jumping from it into the water below.

Was God responsible for the murder of His own Son on the cross? Not a single Christian would charge Him with such a crime. Peter preaching to the Jews on the day of the healing of the lame man at the gate Beautiful, put the blame where it belonged. **"... God of our Fathers hath glorified His son Jesus, whom ye delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go."** (Acts 3:13).

Yet in the permissive sense, God did deliver up Jesus to die, as Peter declared on the day of Pentecost:

***"Him being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."*** (Acts 2:23). God permitted Jesus to die on the cross, but it was the Jews *who were responsible for his death!*

Thus we see that God, as far as His will is concerned, permits things to occur that He personally does not wish to see happen, but for other reasons, which in the end will effect the greatest good for His universe He allows to take place.

For this reason God permits sickness to come upon His people, although He is not responsible for the sickness, and has made full provision for them so that they need not be sick.

Thus it was in the case of Job. It is certain that God received no satisfaction from seeing Job suffer, yet for certain reasons He did permit him to suffer. What were these reasons? We shall find an answer to this question in the next chapters.

## Chapter V

### The Hedge of Protection Broken

Job endured great suffering from the boils which Satan had placed upon his body. Why did it happen to him? The whole problem of the Book of Job revolves around this question. Here was a man that God Himself said was perfect and upright, so that there was none like him on the earth. Why then was he the target of such unusual calamities? Job asked a question that has been asked millions of times since. What is the answer?

In seeking the solution, let us first ask another question. Since it was Satan who placed the boils upon Job's body, why was it that he had not done so before? Was it because the devil had any compunction about the matter and had hesitated to inflict injury upon so great and noble a man? We know, of course, that this is not true. Satan far from showing mercy would not hesitate in bringing instant destruction to the whole human race, if it were within his power. The fact is that up to the time the story opens, Satan had not been able to get at Job. God had prepared a hedge of protection about the patriarch, and that is what the devil complained about:

**"Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, about all that he hath on every side?" ... (Job 1:9-10).**

It is evident from this complaint of Satan's that the only reason he had not attacked Job before this was because God had built a hedge about the patriarch which he was unable to penetrate. Here is revealed a tremendous truth. Satan, though a fallen archangel, and indeed a powerful one, has at his disposal strong forces by which he seeks the injury and destruction of the people of God; yet he is restrained from his evil purpose by reason of the fact that God builds a hedge between him and the objects of his wrath. As long as the saints of God walk in obedience and faith before God, the devil cannot penetrate that hedge. **"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."** The child of God is in security and peace. He knows that no enemy can touch him.

*Nevertheless it is possible for the hedge of protection to be broken down.* This is what happened in Job's case, and there are many examples of

this to be found in the Scriptures. An instance of this is the trials that Jonah suffered when he fled from the presence of the Lord after he had refused to obey Jehovah's command. The story is too familiar to need repetition here.

## Chapter VI

### Why Did Job Suffer?

In the last chapter we have seen that God builds a hedge of protection around His people, but that it is possible for that hedge to be broken down. That when this hedge of protection fails Satan is able to afflict the bodies of God's people with disease. In Deuteronomy there are clear warnings that if the children of Israel disobeyed the commandments of the Lord, sickness would result. In that chapter many of the common diseases are recorded by name. From this we understand that sin can open the way for sickness to come.

But Job was not sick because he had committed some outbroken sin. On this point he stoutly defended his integrity before his friends who insisted that he should confess wrong doing. But God Himself defended Job against their accusations. Later they had to ask Job to pray for them before God would forgive them.

Why then was Job sick? Why did he suffer the tortures of a loathsome disease? In other words, "Why do the righteous suffer?"

#### **What Does God Mean by a Perfect Man?**

Perhaps it is time for us to ask what God means by the word "perfect." In the popular mind, the word "perfect" is generally supposed to mean "sinless perfection." This is a serious mistake and is caused by ignorance of the way the term is used in the Old Testament. People who are afflicted in body are often wont to say that since Job was a "perfect man" and yet he suffered in body, therefore those who are not perfect could much less expect deliverance from sickness. (These people usually overlook the fact that Job got healed.)

Was Job a perfect man in the sense of sinless perfection? How and what does God mean in the Old Testament by the word "perfection?" In answering this question, let us notice what God said about Noah, the great man of faith of ante-diluvian age. The Scriptures say that **"Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God."** (Gen. 6:9) Now it is evident that Noah was far from perfect in the sense of sinless perfection. In fact by reason of his drunkenness he was accessory to a

shameful act committed by his son, Ham. (Gen. 9:21-23) What did God mean when he said that Noah was perfect in his generations? It simply meant that Noah was as good a man as God could expect under the circumstances in which he lived. God does not exact more from men than what they can give.

With this simple fact in mind we may understand that Job was perfect only in the sense that he was as good a man as God could expect in the time that he lived. A perfect apple in June is a long way from the perfect apple of October. There was much for Job to learn, and in the process of learning these things, as with many other saints, he went through the furnace of affliction.

### **Job's Wife**

Elsewhere we have noted that Job called to mind the iniquities of his youth. Certainly in his younger days he had made a very poor choice of a wife. When the test came she rebelled and condemned Job for maintaining his faith in God. She was worse than the ordinary fair-weather religionist. Her advice to Job was to **"curse God and die."** (Job 2:9) One can scarcely imagine a more wicked woman than one who would advise her husband to die a blasphemer. She was willing to enjoy the blessings of Providence, but was ready to accuse God to His face when misfortune came.

Apparently Job had not taken God into account when he made his choice of a wife. This woman bore him a family of worldly children. They were given to pleasure seeking, surfeiting and the drinking of wine, all of which caused Job no little anxiety.

### **Job's Self-Righteousness**

The lack of consecration of Job's family weakened his own position, though it is to be noted that God did not hold that against him. There was something however in Job's character that he himself, perhaps, did not suspect was there — self-righteousness. As Elihu declared, God deals with the human race that **"he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man."** (Job 33:17)

It is sometimes true that men whose character is otherwise above reproach are notoriously self-righteous. Such people may appear to be model Christians. Job was a good man but he was very persistent in maintaining his own righteousness. It was all right for God to say that Job was perfect, but it was wrong for Job to proclaim it. Job said in his complaint to God, **"He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked,"** inferring

that he was of the former class. In the preceding verse 17, he had declared that God had multiplied his wounds without cause.

All through the discourses of Job we find him justifying himself. **"Behold now I have ordered my cause, I know I shall be justified."** (Job 13:18) Again in Job 16:17, he declares that his troubles came **"not for any injustice in mine hands: also my prayer is pure."** Perhaps these words had a truth in them but it was not for him to say them. It showed a lack of humility on his part.

The three so-called comforters of Job missed the mark in analyzing the cause of Job's troubles, and they were finally silenced. **"So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes."** (Job 32:1). Then Elihu whose spiritual insight was more discerning than the other three, addressed Job. He was not an externalist and moralist as the others were. Elihu felt that Job's righteousness was an element in his difficulties. He quotes Job as saying:

**"I am clean without transgression. I am innocent, neither is there iniquity in me."** (Job 33:9). Elihu further quotes Job as saying, **"I am righteous: and God hath taken away judgment."** (Job 34:5) He then proceeded in a masterly discourse to show how great God and His works were and the need of humility before Him. It is apparent however that Job did not accept Elihu's admonitions.

### **Job's Fears**

There was another circumstance about Job, which if there were no other cause, could have resulted in his calamity. He was filled with fear—he was afraid, and the very thing that he was afraid of came upon him:

**"For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me. I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came."** Job 3:2526).

Here is the very heart of the trouble. Whatever else we may have in our experience if we have not conquered the fear problem we are on vulnerable ground. Satan has a perfect opening, where fear is. Where there is faith, there is no fear. Where there is fear, there is no faith. Job confessed that the very thing he was afraid of came upon him. Let a person fear and the devil will take advantage of him. Jesus was ever admonishing his disciples against fear. "Fear not," He said. "Be not afraid." "Why do ye doubt?" If one's trust is truly in God he will not fear. In that proportion that one fears he is not trusting God.

Fear is the very thing that can bring sickness into the home. Fear is the cause of many a nervous disorder. Fear breaks down the moral strength of an individual. Fear oppresses, depresses, and can even possess.

Fear is caused by looking at circumstances rather than to God's word. Fear results from believing conditions, from believing symptoms rather than what God has said.

When Job got to thinking about his troubles he got the more afraid. **"I am afraid of all my sorrows, I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent."** Job believed that he was innocent, but was afraid that God would, according to some mysterious reckoning of which he was ignorant, reckon him guilty. There is a wholesome fear, the fear of the Lord, which is a strength to faith. But another kind of fear had gotten hold of Job and had worked on him long before his calamities had arrived. These fears had caused him to be restless, to be in constant dread that something terrible was about to happen. And in this state of mind he opened the very door for his fears to materialize. The very thing that he expected at last came to pass.

Job unintentionally became an instrument through which his troubles came. Thus do we see that many righteous suffer because they allow fear to dominate their lives. They expect evil to visit them, and at length it does.

## Chapter VII

### God Uses All Things for His Glory

And now we come to a truth which is rarely understood even among devout Christians. There are those who suppose that when they are sick that they are suffering for the glory of God. Consequently they have no faith for deliverance but resign themselves to what they suppose is the mysterious will of God. Such people may for years suffer an affliction from which, if they only knew the truth, they could be delivered.

There are others who believe that God never uses sickness as a means of discipline. In this they have a part truth but not all the truth. True, there is no need for a Christian to be sick. God has expressed His will that the Christian should prosper and be in health even as his soul prospers. God has expressed His will time and again in the Scriptures that He desires to heal all the diseases of His people. In fact, through His stripes on Calvary we are assured that we already are potentially healed. **"By his stripes ye were healed."** Hence it is too late for God to change His mind, if indeed He did change His mind. The act has already been done! The promise already has been given.

However many people because of the lack of knowledge of God's word do remain sick. There are others who because of stubbornness or disobedience to God's word suffer like Saul. (I Sam. 16:23) Still others as Job give way to their fears until the thing they fear comes upon them. (Job 3:25-26) Is it to be thought that God does not sometimes use these afflictions to draw men nearer to Himself? Is it true that in this case "all things" do not work together for good with them who love God and are called according to His purpose?

It must be admitted that in many cases or even in most cases, sickness does not result in any good at all. It is a sad fact that people who have spent their lives as invalids often develop a most irritable spirit. Disease is from the devil and he does not intend as far as he is concerned to accomplish anything good but only the destruction of his victim. Disease often results in cutting people off in the midst of their years. The fact is, and it cannot be ignored, that the results of sickness often develop into nervous disorders



that in many cases affect the individual's disposition adversely, and if disease runs its full course, may lead to insanity. In view of this every day observation, it is absurd, even ridiculous to imagine that God, in some mysterious way is sanctifying the soul through sickness of the body. Especially is this true in view of the fact that God has obligated Himself through many clear promises that He will heal those who come to Him, and indeed has even said that Divine healing is "the children's bread."

### **How Sickness May Be Divine Discipline**

How then can sickness be used as Divine discipline? If God does not send the affliction, how then can He use it for His glory? Actually the answer to all this is simple. To illustrate this truth we shall take an extreme example. In I Corinthians 5, there is the case of a member of the Corinthian Church who had fallen into deep sin, yet continued to brazenly maintain his religious profession. He was guilty of incest. The Apostle Paul with the other members of the church turned him over **"to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."** (I Cor. 5:5) The action was not without result. The man was reduced to a most abject physical condition that brought him to repentance and to an understanding of his real spiritual condition. In the next epistle of II Corinthians, Paul wrote to the Church advising them to seek the restoration and recovery of the one that had come under judgment. It is evident that affliction of the body in this case was definitely used to bring the person back to God.

Sickness in itself worketh no moral gain in a person's life. It can only act as a lash to get people to turn from their own will to God's will. Surely a Christian should not need this kind of discipline. Surely we should not say by our conduct, that if God prospers us, we will not serve Him, and that we will obey Him Only if He puts the whip on our back!

Yet it is true that there are people that will seek God's will only when they suffer. Only when they go through great pain will they give up certain gods that have secured the affection of their hearts. **"Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now I have kept thy word."** (Psa. 119:67) In their troubles they turn to God, for deliverance from sickness and other afflictions that have come upon them Notice this however: It was not the sickness that purified them. Neither did God send the sickness. He permitted it to come, and God is willing to use the circumstance that was not of His own making to draw the person back to Himself.

## Chapter VIII

### How Job Received Healing

It is a commentary on human nature to observe the number of people who think of Job as a man who became dreadfully sick and could not be healed. Yet the fact is that he received complete deliverance, and lived in good health as far as we know for 140 years. Job's testimony is one for healing. Job had a fatal disease, but God would not let the devil kill him. In the end, Job was healed by a miracle of God. The question we are now to ask is: How did Job get healed?

#### **Job Saw God's Greatness**

Notice how the Lord dealt with Job. First of all He got his attention from himself unto God. Job had been absorbed with his troubles, his afflictions, his sufferings. God sought to reveal Himself to him. He called Job's attention to His great works of creation which he had created in past ages when the **"morning stars sang together."** (Job 38:7). He reminded Job of His mighty works in the seas and in the earth. That by His wisdom and power, He had established the heavens. He spoke of the "influences" or bonds holding holding the stars in their orbits. He referred to the secrets of the stars in their orbits. He referred to the secrets of the Pleiades, and to mighty Orion in distant space, which He created.

One of the first steps that a "chronic" sick person should take is to get his attention off of himself, his troubles, his suffering, and his symptoms. The best way to accomplish this is for him to absorb himself in God's word, and His promises. Let him turn his eyes from his own weakness unto God's power and might. People don't get healing by reasoning it out like an arithmetic problem. People don't get healing by keeping their attention on their own weaknesses. Healing comes by faith. And faith comes as one becomes absorbed in the greatness and goodness of God.

#### **He Ceased Questioning God's Providence**

Many people are prone to question God's goodness or His wisdom. They say, "Why does God permit this to happen?" "Why was not so and so healed?" or "Why do I have to suffer?" First of all we must become reconciled to God. We must say, "Thy will be done." When we say that in

faith, then sickness must go, for God expressed His will as against sickness. Jesus said that healing is "the children's bread." If then we are not healed it cannot be God's fault, it is our own.

Job had not questioned God's right to do as He chose. He did question God's wisdom in what He did. Therein did he make a great mistake. Job got on the right track when he quit trying to justify himself. There are many things that Job did not know. Instead of talking so much, he needed to listen to the voice of God.

### **Job Quit Being Negative**

Job had been very negative. He confessed fear and he begot more fear. That which he was afraid of came upon him, and that which he feared came unto him.

Job had cursed the day of his birth. He had even questioned God's providence in creating him. In his early discourses his words are almost wholly negative. Job confessed weakness and he had weakness. He confessed his misery and he received more misery. It is a true saying that one does not rise higher than his confession.

Yet through the book of Job one notices Job's faith slowly rising over his despair. One of his first feeble confessions of faith was, **"Though he slay me, yet will I trust him."** (Job 13:15) He was resigned to the will of God, even if he misunderstood that will. Later he began dimly to see that the providence of God was working things out for his good and his faith got stronger. He then could say, **"But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."** (Job 23:10)

At the beginning of his illness, Job had begged God to take his life. But gradually his faith rose above all this, and God revealed unto him His power, even the power of the resurrection. God knew that Job would stand true. The mouth of Satan was now shut. Job had proved that God had men who would stand through the fiercest trial. He could then say:

**"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another."** Job 19:25-27

### **He Confessed and Turned From His Self-Righteousness**

The natural result of viewing God's greatness and holiness is to humble men. As Job got a vision of God's power and righteousness he became aware of his own pride and he loathed it. He said, **"Behold, I am vile;**

**what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth."** (Job 40:4) Job was through professing his own righteousness.

True, Job had committed no outbroken sin. He had committed no crime. But he was guilty of a very wrong attitude. He had had an obstinate pride in his own good works. Now, no longer did he protest his own goodness. After he had received a visitation from God, and had seen

His greatness, he considered himself vile, unworthy of the least of the divine benefits. In deep repentance he confessed his error. Said Job, **"I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not ... wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."** (Job 42:3, 6) Repentance and humility is another great step toward healing.

#### **He Prayed for His Friends**

Job's communion with the Lord had been renewed. Now God would have Job's relations with his fellowmen restored. His three friends had missed the mark even worse than he. They were legalists and dogmatists of the first order. They had called upon Job to repent, but they needed to repent of their own pride and bigotry. God had not been pleased with their smug conclusions. Yet God did not ask Job to condemn them. He said to pray for them. And after Job prayed for his friends and they had humbled themselves, God healed Job.

**"And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends; also the Lord gave him twice as much as he had before."** (Job 42:10).

Job was healed! His sickness had been a "captivity." Satan had done his worst. He had afflicted him with boils. He had brought one calamity after another upon Job. But now things changed. God had mended the hedge. Health and prosperity returned to Job. That which the devil had taken away was restored. Job not only was healed, but he received health that enabled him to live 140 years more. God does not allow suffering to come because there is some particular virtue in suffering. Nor does God give rewards because man has done so much penance. But in time of suffering Job had learned lessons which would enable him to enjoy the long years of life before him.

Job never received his healing as long as he prayed to die, or protested his innocence and goodness. He was healed when he saw God's greatness and his own smallness. When he humbled himself God met him. When he

justified God rather than himself, God took up his cause. When he prayed for the deliverance of others, he received his own healing.

### **Why Then Do the Righteous Suffer?**

Thus do we see that in this present time it is the lot of the righteous to suffer. And indeed, if one receives no chastening from the Lord, he may well be alarmed. For all who are true sons of God will receive chastening. And those that be without chastisement are not sons:

**"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." Hebrews 12:6-8.**

Why then do the righteous suffer? Is it that God gets pleasure out of their suffering? Never! God as a Father gets no more pleasure out of seeing His children chastened than does a human father when he punishes his sons. Why then do God's people suffer? The answer is simple. *They suffer so they may learn not to suffer.* For the end of a life of sin and self-will is suffering—eternal suffering. But the end of righteousness is peace, joy in the Holy Ghost, and life everlasting. (Heb. 12:11).

A child must experience certain chastening, but there are also some things that child should never suffer. Would any true parent punish his child by giving it smallpox? The answer is obvious. Likewise, though there are certain things the Christians will suffer, there are other things he need never suffer. Not if he believes God's word and stands upon the promise.

Life is a school to teach us Heaven's ways. They who learn their lessons well, will, like Job, in due time, pass from the trials and temptations into the joy of the Lord at whose right hand there are pleasures forevermore.

The End