

"My God, My God Why Have You Forsaken Me?"

Introduction

Why does God, a God of love, allow suffering in this world?

This is a huge subject! During this pandemic I encourage you to dig into the Bible...

- What does the bible say about suffering?
- Where is God in the suffering?
- What is God revealing to us, teaching us during this period of unprecedented worldwide Covid19 pandemic?

Here are some of my initial thoughts and verses to aid you in your study. I hope they may help you in some way.

The beginning of suffering

Adam's sin caused separation from God (Genesis 3:20-24). No longer would Adam and Eve be able to walk and talk with God in the Garden of Eden. Now toil, hardship, conflict, corruption, drudgery, pain and death were to be a part of their, and our, lives.

As we read on through the bible, we find that:-

- suffering can be the harvest of sin (Hosea 8 part. v7; Luke 13:1-5; Galatians 6:8), both for the individual (Psalm 1) and for the community and nation (Amos 1-2).
- in some circumstances suffering can be regarded as a punishment administered by God, or a chastisement designed to correct the ways of His people (Proverbs 3:12; Judges 2:20-3:6),
- or suffering is a means whereby men are tested or purified (Ps. 66:10; James 1:1-15; 1 Peter 1:7; Romans 5:3-4; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10).
- or suffering is used to bring people closer to God in a new relationship of dependence and fellowship (Psalm 119:67; Romans 8:35-37).

Thus, suffering can be for good (Romans 8:28) though it can have the opposite effect (Mt. 13:21).

God suffers

God did not punish Adam and Eve lightly. I believe He was deeply grieved, hurt, broken and angry as He is when we sin. His beloved creation had disobeyed. The separation was a consequence of Adam's sin, God had no choice. His heart was broken.

The population of Mankind grew on Earth. Sin continued and so did the suffering. In just three chapters we read that God was grieved that He ever created us (Genesis 6:6).

As we read on through the Old Testament, we find that God is regularly met with undeserved irreverence, disrespect and unbelief from Mankind, His creation.

Jesus Suffered

All through Jesus' life on Earth He enjoyed a perfect relationship with God. Jesus lived in perfect union with God every minute of every day – It was His joy. Until the cross...

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus cries out "Father if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." Jesus acknowledged God's will. I wondered if Jesus knew the full extent of what was about to happen. Whether He did or not, Jesus surrendered Himself to the will of God.

Read - Matthew 27 v45-46

There was complete darkness from the sixth hour to ninth hour meaning from midday till 3.00pm. It was the hour in which Jesus was made to stand before God intentionally, willingly the sin bearer.

Isaiah 53v6 "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."
2 Corinthians 5v21 "...God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us..."
1 Peter 2v24 "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree..."

Sin was all around Jesus. He had no sin of His own. However, He took our sin upon him. And as a result, God the Father could not bear to look at Him. God's face was hidden, and a terrible darkness gathered around Jesus. He was not given any strength from His Father, no hidden oil; He was alone. Jesus was separated, rejected, from the One who gave Him life, from the One who had been with Him every minute of the day, from the One who was His source. This darkness of abandonment made Jesus feel distraught. It reduced Him to the piercing cry. The lowest depth of the Saviour's grief.

"Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?"
"My God, My God why have you forsaken me?"

Just as Adam was cast from God's presence so was Jesus. Jesus experienced spiritual death as well as physical death.

Jesus did not forsake God!

Note Jesus cries out twice, 'My God, My God,' as though to say, 'even though you have forsaken me, I have not forsaken you.' Charles Spurgeon states 'The Godly turns to the one who smites him.' Jesus, God's Son, reaches out to His source and makes every effort to draw near to Him. Jesus showed real faith. But God does not intervene.

Lean on God the bed of comfort

How quick do we turn from God when in trials and tribulations? What we go through is nothing compared to what Jesus suffered.

David's Psalms are a real source of comfort during times of difficulty. He writes from his own life experience thus they are real and honest.

Read Psalm 22:1-11

This is a prayer of anguish that David wrote whilst suffering a vicious and prolonged attack which he believed he had done nothing to provoke it. Throughout, he keeps bringing his prayers before God "by day" and "by night." David showed great faith. He is not silent, but God is!

I want to encourage you to also cry out to God when going through these days of trial. We may not hear God, see God or understand why, just as Jesus and David didn't, but they stand testimony to how to cope through suffering.

Lean on God as though you are laying on the comfiest bed. Lean hard on Him, bearing our whole weight upon Him. He can handle it, He is able to bear the full weight of our sins, burdens and cares.

Hebrews 4:14-16 "So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most."

Let us hold to the love and grace that He bestows on us and the promise that we will never be forsaken, abandoned or isolated (Hebrews 13v5). Why? Because God sacrificed His Son on my behalf.

Psalm 23v4 "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for you are with me"

God maybe silent now but with faith we keep leaning into Him. And there I pray we find His peace as we trust that He has a plan.

Jesus turned to scripture and prayed

Both Jesus and David turned to God in their agony.

Whilst Jesus was in agony upon the cross He turned to David's Psalm (Psalm 22:1). Jesus knew the sacred scriptures. When He felt His sharpest grief, He turned to it to find a fitting statement for His suffering and uses it to cry out to God. In essence He was using the Scripture as an aid to talk to God in prayer.

David reveals the tensions between his emotions and faith. However, He kept praying, and turning to the God He knew. The God of Israel. The God of the Old Testament.

Turn to scripture and pray, as a limpet to a rock. It is our anchor

We can so easily in time of trouble, sorrow, pain and hardship turn away from God. I know that I have. However, Jesus, who is our guide and teacher, shows us the importance of turning to God through the Scriptures. In fact, Scripture is the anchor of truth.

I encourage you to turn to Scripture in these times of anguish. It is a source of comfort and an aid to our prayers when we do not know how to pray. And a source of joy. Let nothing drive you from God but go to the foot of the cross and anchor yourself there as one lost at sea clinging to the rock for safety, for his life.

A right response

David asks 'why?' Job never knew why. Jesus asks 'Why?' A word that we would do well to reflect on – 'Why' indeed?

Like David and Job we may never know the reason. Though as Jesus shows us in the Garden of Gethsemane our response should be one of surrender, "Not my will, but yours be done."

It was no fault of Jesus that He suffered. He was sinless in every way. Yet, He took on my sin, your sin, our sin. And the consequences of sin is separation from God. By taking our sin Jesus took our punishment so that we can find God's forgiveness and be reunited with God.

Therefore, let us hate the sin that brought such agony upon our beloved Lord. When we are struggling to break any chain of sin we would do well to remember the ear-piercing cry upon the cross.

Conclusion

Like Jesus and David let us to show faith as we travel through this unprecedented time.

Let us:

1. lean on God as though leaning on a bed for comfort
2. turn to Scripture and use it to guide your prayers. Be like a limpet to a rock, for, it is your anchor.
3. remember why Jesus cried the blood curdling words 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me' and abhor sin in our lives.

There is a challenge here to be a witness for Him. To point people to Him. To be salt and light in the darkness. To point out sin. Though, we are not the judge of life. That is God's role.

One more closing thought: Though we will suffer here on earth, even though we will all face death, those who have faith in Jesus Christ will share in His glorious resurrection when Jesus comes again. And that is something to shout about. HALLELUJAH!!!