

Practical Bible Principles For Living



Where Is God When It Hurts?

By J.L. Caldwell, Pastor
New Jerusalem Baptist Cathedral

Where is God when it hurts, is a question that is often asked in the back of our minds when we, or our loved ones are paining and suffering too much for whatever the reason.

It is no secret here, God is in the same place when your loved ones are hurting and suffering as when His Son, the Christ, was hanging on the cross dying in pain for our sins. God at that time was not hiding, but only silent. Maybe it is God's silence, when we are hurting, that causes us much concern. It is that feeling of being abandoned by the God who promised to love us (read Matthew 27:46). When we feel abandoned by God, we quickly conclude that God really didn't love me and/or that I haven't been good enough for God to take the time to love me and take away my suffering and pain. Read Job 6:1-4, and understand Job's feelings when he was experiencing his physical and emotional sickness. Remember now, that Job was no stranger to God, for Job worshipped God regularly (read Job 1:1-8).

Some of us are not as faithful in worshiping God as the servant Job. Today's fast "goings" and "comings" have gotten many church goers and practicing Christians into such faster paces than they need to be traveling. Therefore, they have strayed away from the basic requirements of private and collective prayer, and "tuned" worship attitudes. Often times in the midst of today's "rat race," we feel separated, and far removed from God. We feel awkward and unassured when we

attempt to call on God when suffering and pain comes. We begin to feel guilty in calling on God in our times of need because we do not feel we have done our part in keeping in touch with God. It can almost be like calling on a stranger. Our spiritual estrangement and knowledge of our nonperformance in staying in touch with God, often adds to the real on-going suffering that we may be experiencing at that time. So then, we have a tendency to pray not in faith, as required, but pray as a whining child, hoping that our whining will get God's attention (read James 1:6-7). We must pray in faith and not in whining and wishing that we may be able to attract God to heal our hurt and pain.

Pain and suffering are not the same. Suffering is the experiencing of guilt, low self-esteem, anxiety, worry and disobedience, resulting from the violation of spiritual, physical and social moral standards. Pain is the physical and mental discomfort that serves as a warning flag that tells us that something is out of balance. As practicing Christians, we know that God still loves us when we pain and suffer (read Romans 8:28). God, Almighty, never designed us to experience pain and suffering. Pain and suffering is the direct result of sin. This is why we need a Savior to save us from our suffering (salvation). There are basically two reasons why we may suffer physically and mentally in pain. First, God allows suffering to fall upon us in order to test our

faith and dependence upon Him (James 1:2-4; I Peter 1:3-9; and I Peter 4:12-13). Second, suffering comes to us as the direct result of the choices we make for ourselves. This particular suffering must be borne by us and is usually most painful to us regardless of its character. This type suffering is the result of our making decisions without seeking God's wisdom in the issue through faithful praying. Instead, we listen to well-meaning friends, our insecure feelings, desperate emotions, and even our own incorrect knowledge and wisdom (read Proverbs 14:12; James 1:5; and I Peter 3:17). Some of us mistakenly replace God and His wisdom with our limited, accumulated, worldly human knowledge (read John 3:27 and John 15:5).

Unknowingly, much of the source of our worldly suffering is found in the spiritual realm of our lives. This is an often neglected part of our conscious thinking. For all we know there may be no such thing as a spiritual realm (I Peter 5:8 and Ephesians 6:11-13). In this last verse we are told to prepare for the on-coming spiritual attacks from "unseen" powers. In short, satan wishes to destroy us as he promised God he would do, providing God would remove His love and caring hands from us. This, we must remember, was the primary issue between God and satan over the servant Job. Are we so worthy to God that satan would want to have us for himself so that he can have the pleasure of destroying us with pain and suffering as he attempted to do to God's servant Job?

God has put pain and suffering here among us for a good reason. All of God's reasons are good whether we agree with them or not (Psalm 18:30). We tend to judge how good God is by our own human standards and expectations. Don't forget, we're human, God is Spiritual (John 4:24). Only when we train ourselves to think like God and Christ will we know what is right and why certain things happen to us for the good or bad (Romans 8:27; I Corinthians 2:16; and Philippians 2:5). When we pit our minds against God to determine who is right or why am I hurting and you don't believe God should allow you to hurt, you have then recreated the old theological argument of "duality." Meaning, God should do things the way I see them and not allow things to take place that bring about unbearable

suffering and pain. Thus, when God doesn't stop the pain at our command, we get angry and upset. We stop going to church, we stop praying, we stop ushering and singing in the choir and we don't perform our faithful duties as officers in the church. Why? Because we're mad at God. We are then like children acting out toward our parents because we didn't have our way. Job got himself in deep trouble with God in a similar situation (read Job 38). As we often go to the doctor for relief of physical and mental suffering, God has designed our souls to cry out to him when we hurt. For it is God who has made us and not we ourselves (John 1:3). Our sins bring about pain and suffering. Christ took all of our sins that created hurt and pain to Him, and carried them to the cross with him. We, ourselves, should have experienced suffering this hurt and pain, and rightfully so. For we have sinned and should pay the painful price of eternal death and not Christ.

Hurt and pain brings us to God. It was the hurt and suffering that were experienced by Christ on the Cross of Calvary that purchased our redemption from sin and satan. It may sound crazy in the human realm, but in the spiritual realm this makes sense. It behooves us to get tuned in to God and stay tuned. And besides, the "golden rule" applies here. He (God) who has the gold, makes the rules. What God does is always right! His power testifies to this fact. God will not remove pain and suffering from us until an appointed time.

God has appointed a time to take all suffering and pain away from His creation (read Revelation 21:4). If there is anything we as humans understand, it is pain and suffering. Pain gets our attention. Whether it be on the job, in the home or in the hospital, does God get our attention when we are suffering and paining?

God is the same God in our good times, when we have no pain, as well as when we're having our bad times and filled with suffering. Being day or night doesn't change God and who He is. God changes not (Malachi 3:6). It is we who change under the pressure of stress, hurt and pain. What God wants us to do in the middle of our suffering is to exercise our faith in Him and prove Him and see if He doesn't care for us (Malachi 3:10). God is still loving and kind when we're suffering. It is our responsibility to call on our Creator in our time of

need. It is then we'll be practicing and exercising our salvation — whereby, Christ saves us from all of the unnecessary hurt and pain that would separate us from God. And at the same time allow that suffering that will draw us close to Him. Otherwise, we would have a tendency not to draw right to God on our own and when things are going well with us. God has His ways to get our attention so that we can experience His true love for us. Just like birth pains bring forth new life, there is a blessed gift for us each time we experience suffering and pain. The gift is always there and it is our responsibility to find it (read II Corinthians 4:7-12). Remember Christ warned us of the pending chance that hurt and suffering may befall us (Matthew 24:16-21). But we shouldn't be afraid of suffering, especially for Christ's sake (Philippians 1:29 and Romans 8:18). One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is long suffering — enduring and persevering (Galatians 5:22).

Pain is here to stay, but God does not want suffering to remain with us for a life time. God's Grace is sufficient and is always available to His children (read II Corinthians 4:7-11).

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John L. Caldwell, Pastor

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9:30 A.M.—Sunday School
11:00 A.M.—Worship Service
Children's Church School

Prayer Service: 7:00 p.m. (1st & 3rd Wednesdays)

Bible Study: (2nd and 4th Sundays)
TOPIC: Seeking Practical Solutions To Life's Problems

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W.W. Easley, Jr., Minister

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9:30 A.M.—Sunday School
11:00 A.M.—Regular Worship

Each Wednesday
Prayer Service—Noon
Jr. Church—Wednesday—6:00 P.M.

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The Pastor

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