

When God's Ways Do Not Seem To Make Any Sense

The Lord said, "My thoughts are not your thoughts neither are your ways My ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts higher than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8 & 9).

We are writing this article to encourage the many Christians who are struggling with difficult circumstances that do not seem to make any sense to them. God's ways are perfect (2 Samuel 22:31) even if we cannot understand why severe trials come our way. Examples of immense suffering amongst dedicated Christians could fill pages of hundreds of books. Inexplicable sorrows and devastations, wars, natural disasters, famines, diseases, epidemics, infertility, birth defects, premature deaths in infants and young children, loneliness, rejection, feelings of failure, mental illness, death of a spouse, poverty, unemployment, unruly teenage children, unanswered prayer, persecution, lawlessness and thousands of other conditions of humanity often cause the sufferer to ask, "Why, Lord?" Sometimes God does not make any sense to us. When we are feeling this way we need to remember, God is in control and nothing happens without His prior knowledge and according to His will (Matthew 10:29). "I am God and there is no one else. I form the light and create darkness. I make peace and create calamity. I am God Who does all these things" (Isaiah 45:6 & 7). The Scriptures give us a few reasons for our suffering although these reasons do not explain everything. Sometimes things happen to us because we live in a fallen, sinful, unbelieving, bacteria riddled world and those things alone can cause dreadful situations, and it is all part of the curse Adam brought on the entire earth when he disobeyed the direct instructions and spoken words of God.

God sometimes chooses to allow difficult circumstances to purify, refine, chastise, discipline or humble us. The Lord does not have to explain Himself to us. He is the God of the entire universe and we are created from dust or clay. 'Lord, You are our Father, we are the clay and You our potter and we are all the work of Your hand' (Isaiah 45:9; 64:8). God created us, He owns us and therefore He can righteously do whatever He wants with our lives. Every situation that works in harmony with God's will and His plans for our lives will eventually work for good. Not always for our personal earthly good but for the good of the Kingdom and for the good of our eternal rewards. 'We know all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose' (Romans 8:28). Apostle Paul suffered at the end of his life. He was about to be beheaded and he knew his life was at an end. Many people could look at his death as a tragedy but it was the best for Paul and for his eternal rewards. 'I am being offered (as a sacrifice) and the time of my departure (death) has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith. From now on there is stored up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord the Righteous Judge will give to me on that day (the Day of the Judgement of the Righteous) and not to me only, but also to all those who have loved His appearing' (2 Timothy 4:6 to 8).

It is an incorrect attitude to Scripture to think God does not allow our suffering and every bad thing is the fault of the devil. We must acknowledge the fact we will all suffer as Jesus suffered. 'We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus, if indeed we suffer with Him so we may also be glorified with Him. The sufferings of this present time (on earth) are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed toward us' (Romans 8:17 & 18). So if we want to be glorified with Jesus we must suffer with Him. We are not above our Master. 'A disciple is not above his teacher nor a servant above his Lord' (Matthew 10:24). God tests our faith and our trust in Him. 'Do not be afraid for God has come to test you so His fear (reverence, awe, respect) may be before you so you will not sin' (Exodus 20:20). It is common for people in a crisis to feel frustration, disappointment and great sorrow at the Lord and we can feel He has let us down. This was how Jacob felt (Genesis 47:9). Once we are in heaven it will all make sense but when we are going through it, the confusion and despair can be overwhelming. We must trust God in these situations and in time we will understand. When situations are illogical, extreme and/or inconsistent with the Scriptures, many people question His authenticity or the accuracy of the Bible and walk away from Him. Jesus said, "What was sown on the rocky places is he who hears the Word and immediately with joy receives it, yet he has no root in himself but endures for a while. When oppression or persecution arises because of the Word, immediately he stumbles" (Matthew 13:20 & 21). The fact is, God tests our faith to prove we can love Him, believe in Him, trust Him, follow Him and rejoice in Him regardless of our circumstances, and that leads us to salvation. We need to love God for Who He is, not solely for what He does for us. That is when this Scripture is ratified ... 'Greatly rejoice, though for a little while you have been put to grief in various trials so the proof of your faith, which is more precious than gold that perishes even though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise, glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Whom not having known, you love. In Whom though you do not see Him, yet believing in Him, you rejoice greatly with unspeakable joy and full of glory, receiving the result of your faith which is the salvation of your souls' (1 Peter 1:6 to 9).

God makes us fit to live in the Kingdom of Heaven. 'Give thanks to the Father Who made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of God's people in light' (Colossians 1:12). We are all sinners saved by the grace

and mercy of God but some people have a lot of sinful 'baggage' that has to be cleansed before they could live in heaven, which is a pure and holy place. So to refine and purify us to make us fit for the Kingdom of God, He uses troubles, difficulties and problems to scrape the 'dross' off our lives (Proverbs 25:4). We must work with the Lord and make a conscious decision to cleanse and purify ourselves and make ourselves ready for eternity as much as is humanly possible, but always with the Lord's help. 'Many people will purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined' (Daniel 12:10). 'Jesus gave Himself for us so He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works' (Titus 2:14). 'Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad, and let us give the glory to God for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His Bride has made herself ready' (Revelation 19:7).

God chastises, disciplines, chastens and scourges us (Hebrews 12:6), which also refines us. 'My son, do not despise chastisement of the Lord neither be weary of His reproof, for whom the Lord loves He reproves as a father reproves the son in whom he delights' (Proverbs 3:11 & 12). 'Have you forgotten the exhortation which reasons with you as with children, "My son, do not take lightly the chastening of the Lord nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him, for whom the Lord loves He chastens and He scourges every son whom He receives." It is for discipline you endure. God deals with you as with children. What son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are without discipline, of which all have been made partakers, then are you illegitimate and not children (of God). We had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us and we paid them respect. Should we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live eternally? They punished us as seemed good to them but God disciplines us for our profit so we may be partakers of His holiness. All chastening seems for the present to be not joyous but grievous yet afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been disciplined' (Hebrews 12:5 to 11). Scourging hurts! Suffering brings the reward of refining us. "Behold, I have refined you but not as silver. I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction" (Isaiah 48:10). 'Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects. Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. He wounds and binds up. He injures and His hands make whole ... When He has tried me I will come forth like gold' (Job 5:17 & 18; 23:10). Notice the verse says, God punishes us for our own profit, for our good so we may be partakers of his holiness.

Some problems can be of our own making. Our own sin or foolishness at any age can bring severe consequences. 'If you ... will not listen to Me, I will chastise you seven times more for your sins' (Leviticus 26:18). We cannot blame God for the consequences of our own sin or foolishness. Sinful and foolish behaviour destroys one's own life. Sometimes the entire family and household suffer too (Proverbs 14:1). When it comes to unruly teenage children, we need to understand, although they may have been influenced by the devil, their own sin is their own choice. Nobody forces them to rebel. They choose to do so. All we can do is pray for them, let go and allow God to deal with them. God does not have grandchildren. Our children belong to Him and if they choose to rebel against their Heavenly Father, they will have to suffer the consequences no matter how hard the discipline or long it takes. Letting go is not ceasing your love for them. Letting go is allowing God to work in His way and in His time – even if it takes years. We must put our trust in the Lord and allow Him to take care of our children (Hebrews 2:13).

There is a direct link between rebellion, sin, lust, suffering and sometimes death (James 1:14 & 15). God's handbook, the Bible tells us how to behave and if we disobey His instructions, that often leads to catastrophe. Many of our trials are a direct result of our own sin or unwise behaviour. For example, the Lord told us many times not to become drunk with alcohol. A wise and faithful Christian will never touch alcohol. Rebellious Christians sometimes drink to excess and think they are so smart when drunk. Drunkenness can result in a host of serious consequences and those who choose to drink alcohol are foolish. The Lord did not create our bodies to be able to cope with alcohol so the drinker will suffer the consequences of their own actions. Problems caused by alcohol is not God's discipline, it is a result of sin. He has already warned people not to drink! Smoking is also sin. God did not create our bodies to cope with the addictive substances within cigarettes, cigars, cheroot or any kind of tobacco, marijuana or any other drug. Smoking can lead to serious troubles. The Bible does not tell us not to smoke but the Bible does say we are not to defile our bodies because we are the Temple of the Holy Spirit. 'Do you not know or realise your body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you, which you have from God? You are not your own, you were bought with a price (the blood of Jesus). Therefore glorify God in your body and in your Spirit, which are God's' (1 Corinthians 6:19 & 20). Have you seen people standing outside the church having a cigarette? That is not glorifying God, that is defiling His Temple with sin, shame and disgrace.

Taking illegal narcotics can result in mental illness, which is a consequence of sin. Illegal drugs are illegal for a reason – they damage the body. By taking illegal drugs the person is breaking the law and as Christians we must obey the laws of the land. Another sin that is very destructive is wanton sex that can lead to disease or unwanted pregnancy. God created sex for marriage. Any sex outside of marriage is sinful lust. Same sex marriage is sin. There are always consequences for sin and these people bring self-inflicted consequences of their own actions. When Christians sin God will warn them and if they stop, repent and behave, God will

forgive and blot out the sin. If a Christian continues with their sin, God will publicly expose them. If anyone indulges in consistent sin God can punish severely. 'God is slow to anger and great in power but He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished' (Nahum 1:3). When people sin, the problems they create for themselves can be devastating. Sometimes it can result in the physical or spiritual death of the sinner. 'The wages (payment) of sin is death' (Romans 6:23).

Another sin, which most Christians would not regard as sin, is overeating or compulsive eating which also results in dire consequences including early death. That is not 'God taking them home before their time'. The truth is, they can eat themselves to death. Certainly, there are some people who are overweight because of illness but that is very rare. Most overweight people are that way because of the sin of gluttony, which in the eyes of God is as evil as drunkenness, stubbornness and rebelliousness, which together are as evil and wicked as witchcraft and idolatry (1 Samuel 15:23). Overeating is gluttony and is considered to be evil. "Our son is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey our voice. He is a glutton and a drunkard." All the men of his city will stone him to death with stones so you will put away the evil from the midst of you' (Deuteronomy 21:20 & 21). 'Whoever keeps the law is a wise son but he who is a companion of gluttons shames his father' (Proverbs 28:7). 'Some people are always liars, evil beasts and idle gluttons. This is true. For this reason reprove them sharply so they may be sound in the faith' (Titus 1:12 & 13). If you are overweight, ask God to help you to eat wisely. If we make an effort, God will certainly help. If we all followed the instructions God has given us in the Bible, many of the problems Christians face would not be there. Disobedience to God's instructions is what causes a lot of difficulties.

Wealth can bring great sorrow. 'Be free from the love of money and be content with what you have' (Hebrews 13:5). Money is not evil. It is the love of money, wealth and luxuries that can destroy lives and lead people away from the Lord and salvation. We only have to look at how many people, lives and marriages have been destroyed by gambling to see the lust for wealth is a trap. 'Those who are determined to be wealthy fall into a temptation and a snare, and many foolish and harmful lusts such as what can drown men in ruin and destruction. The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some have been led astray from the faith in their greed and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows but you, man and woman of God, flee these things and follow after righteousness, Godliness, faith, love, patience and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith and lay hold of the eternal life to which you were called' (1 Timothy 6:9 to 12). 'What was sown among the thorns is he who hears the Word but the cares of this age and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word and he becomes unfruitful' (Matthew 13:22). 'Jesus ... said to him, "One thing you lack. Go, sell whatever you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven then come, follow Me." The man's face fell at that saying and he went away sorrowful for he was one who had great wealth. Jesus said to His disciples, "How difficult it is for those who have riches to enter into the Kingdom of God! ... It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God"' (Mark 10:21 to 25). 'Behold, this is the man who did not make God his strength but trusted in the abundance of his riches and strengthened himself in his wickedness' (Psalm 52:7). When a wealthy person loses everything, it could be because they have not been wise with their money or it could be the Lord, Who knows best, has taken the wealth from that person to save their souls, which is far more important.

There are many problems caused by demonic influence or activity but nothing happens to a Christian unless God allows it. When the devil wanted to attack Peter, Jesus prayed for him (Luke 22:31 & 32). When the Lord held Job up as an example of righteousness, He allowed the devil to utterly destroy Job's life but was not allowed to kill him (Job chapters 1 & 2). God could have stopped the attack on Job's life if He wanted to but allowed the terrible attack to go ahead. When Job became confused and distressed because of his intense suffering, which was very understandable, God had no pity on him but said to Job, "Now brace yourself like a man" (Job 38:3; 40:7). We can sometimes feel sorry for ourselves but God never feels sorry for us. He has given us this warning ... 'Be sober and self-controlled. Be watchful. Your adversary the devil walks around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (or destroy)' (1 Peter 5:8). 'Do not be afraid of the things you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison so you may be tested ... Be faithful to death and I will give you the crown of life' (Revelation 2:10). Sometimes we can fight these problems off through prayer and by quoting the Word of God like Jesus did when He said, "It is written ..." (Matthew 4:4, 6, 7 & 10). 'Be subject to God, resist the devil and it will flee from you' (James 4:7). The weaker your relationship with God, the more likely it is the devil will take advantage of the weakness and devour you. To stand against attacks from the evil one we must have the whole armour of God and have a strong faith. 'Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armour of God so you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Our wrestling (troubles) is not against flesh and blood but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world's rulers of the darkness of this age and against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. To counter this, put on the whole armour of God so you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all you can, to stand your ground. Stand therefore, having the belt of truth buckled around your waist. Having put on the breastplate of righteousness and having fitted your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace, above all take up the

shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Holy Spirit, which is the spoken Word of God' (Ephesians 6:10 to 17).

Look at the life of Job. This righteous man had done no wrong and neither had his loyal wife. God was proud of Job and held him up as an example of righteousness. God allowed Job and his wife to suffer a staggering series of losses; their ten children died, wealth, servants, health, reputation and home were all destroyed. Mrs Job would have needed to financially support her very ill husband even though she was grieving for her children. Mrs Job did not deserve any of the suffering she went through. She cried out in her anguish and sorrow, "Do you still maintain your integrity? Renounce God and die." But Job still feared (respected) the Lord and said, "You speak as a foolish woman. Will we receive good at the hand of God and will we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his words' (Job 2:9 & 10). Job worshipped the Lord after all these things had happened. 'Job arose, tore his robe, shaved his head, fell down on the ground and worshiped. He said, "God gave and God has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." In all this, Job did not sin nor charge God with wrongdoing' (Job 1:20 to 22). "Though He slay me, yet I will trust in Him" (Job 13:15). Many people feel they have lost the sense of the Lord's presence when going through deep suffering and Job was no exception. God sometimes allows us to receive evil attacks (Job 2:10), sometimes God allows evil to take away what we have and the following verses confirm that. 'All Job's brothers, all his sisters and all those who had been of his acquaintance before, came ... and comforted Job and consoled him concerning all the evil God had brought on him' (Job 42:11). 'God gave and God has taken away' (Job 1:21). This is Scripture! What we must do in those situations is what Job did. He continued to trust and respect God (Job 13:15), he maintained his integrity and righteousness and he did not use sinful words (Job 1:22). We need to accept the trials God has set before us like Job did and like Jesus did, even when the situation does not seem to make any sense. 'Jesus, in the days of His flesh, having offered up prayers and petitions with strong crying and tears to God Who was able to save Him from death and having been heard for His Godly fear, though He was God's Son, yet He learned obedience by the things He suffered' (Hebrews 5:7 & 8).

Jesus went through terrible, torturous suffering but His response was to yield His will to God's will. "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42). God allows us to suffer terrible trials to test us and there are many verses to confirm that (Genesis 22:1; Exodus 15:25; 16:4). 'God left Hezekiah to test him so He might know all that was in his heart' (2 Chronicles 32:31). It will be after this world is over and done with and we are in heaven when God will reveal to us what our suffering was all about and then we will receive the crown of righteousness, the crown of life, a crown of gold and other eternal rewards stored up in heaven. We need to keep our eyes on the Lord and not on our earthly troubles. We need to overcome the feelings of despair and praise God regardless of our situation on earth. There are numerous eternal rewards we will receive when we overcome terrible events in our lives, but only if we continue walking with the Lord. If we give up and reject God He will in turn reject us and take all of our rewards and give them to someone else (Matthew 25:28 & 29). The Lord promises special gifts for those who overcome hardships (Revelation 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21).

The feeling God is distant can compound feelings of despair. We know God created the earth, the entire universe, all plant and animal life by simply speaking it into existence so we know He has the power to heal, restore, find a lost child, destroy cancer and help with every other problem just by speaking His Word (Luke 7:7), but when He chooses not to it can bring absolute despair or feelings of hopelessness. The pain can be overwhelming, demoralising, soul destroying, emotionally weakening and we could end up with a broken spirit. In spite of all our negative emotions, God is actually closer to us than we realise. 'The Lord's eyes are toward the righteous. His ears listen to their cry ... The righteous cry and the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. God is near to those who have a broken heart and saves those who have a crushed spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivers him out of them all' (Psalm 34:15, 17 to 19). All we can do in that situation is look up to God and not inwardly. We are not alone when we feel as though God has abandoned or forsaken us. Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46). Others cried out, "How long Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide Your face from me? How long will I take counsel in my soul having sorrow in my heart every day? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Behold, answer me my God. Give light to my eyes lest I die" (Psalm 13:1 to 3). "Do not hide Your face from me. Do not put your servant away in anger. You have been my help. Do not abandon me nor forsake me, God of my salvation" (Psalm 27:9). Circumstances can sometimes leave people feeling alone, abandoned or forsaken but in reality, God said He would never ever leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). He does test our faith and trust in Him and we are told not to be astonished at God's testing because His testing is not a strange thing. 'Beloved, do not be astonished at the fiery trial that has come upon you to test you as though a strange thing has happened to you' (1 Peter 4:12). We were warned we would have problems (John 16:33) and we would be persecuted for our faith (2 Timothy 3:12).

As Christians we all have the hope of eternal life despite earthly sorrows but that does not always ease the pain. The Lord sometimes allows terrible things to happen to His dedicated, committed disciples, but we

need to try to look at hardships from God's point of view, not our human point of view. God knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10) and He knows what the outcome will be (James 5:11). God has our eternal destiny in mind, not our short-term earthy life. We need to look at everything from an eternal, spiritual perspective not an earthy transient perspective. Although the Lord does not have to explain Himself to us, in His mercy and grace He has revealed to us why life can go terribly wrong. Sometimes God uses what seems to be a tragedy to increase the Kingdom of God. When Jesus died the shockingly torturous death of the cross, millions have gained salvation through His death. The Lord encourages us with His words of comfort. 'Do not be afraid for I am with you. Do not be dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you. Yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness' (Isaiah 41:10). When God does not rescue us from circumstances we may feel abandoned or disillusioned. Those of us who have lived many years can understand those feelings. All people go through terrible times because we all live on this fallen earth and have to share our space with wicked people who do wicked things. Sometimes the Lord delivers us out of their hands and sometimes He allows us to be killed by the wicked ones. It is the God-fearing people who have hope in these circumstances.

When we suffer dreadful circumstances we can be assured, God has not lost control and He has not stopped loving us. It is not pain or suffering that destroys faith and breaks the spirit, it is confusion. Therefore we must hold on to the facts according to the Bible. God is in control and He loves us with an eternal love (Jeremiah 31:3). Humans are able to withstand enormous suffering including facing death when we have the hope of glory. If people do not have that assurance they can become confused and disillusioned. People sometimes allow themselves to sink down into depression over a tragedy and that does not give the Lord any glory. People can choose to wallow in self-pity and feel down or they can combat those dark feelings by obeying what the Bible says. 'Put on a garland (flowers) for ashes, the oil (anointing) of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (depression) so they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord so He may be glorified' (Isaiah 61:3). We have the authority in Jesus to rebuke the feelings of depression, stand against it and worship the Lord. Depression is caused by an evil spirit and it is up to us to fight it, but first we must submit ourselves to the authority of God. 'Be subject to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you' (James 4:7). By praising and worshipping the Lord we give Him the glory and we also remove the spirit of depression. Darkness cannot stand against genuine worship. If you are feeling depressed for any reason, take a stand against it, rebuke it and praise the Lord. If you have to do that every day for weeks, then do it. Eventually, the spirit of depression will leave and you can be free of it. It is the devil that likes to cause people to play the victim and to feel sorry for themselves but in the Lord we can overcome those negative feelings.

The key word is expectation. When we expect God to act in a certain way or answer a prayer in a time we want and He does not do that, many people fail their test of faith. God is sovereign and does things in His own time (Titus 1:3). Abraham and Sarah were past the age of fertility but by their faith and hope, Sarah had Isaac when they were aged ninety and one hundred years old (Genesis 17:17). Zachariah and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, were in the same situation but neither couple ever gave up hope of having their own child. Notice what the holy angel Gabriel said to Zachariah. "Do not be afraid Zachariah, because your request has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you will name him John" (Luke 1:13). Zachariah's constant prayer for a child had been answered, even though they were quite aged. God did eventually answer their prayers but sometimes, in His foreknowledge of what is best, He may not give us what we want when we want it. We cannot build up a theological scenario and expect God to bless it because that is when God ignores our prayers, which in turn bring feelings of rejection. God may appear to be silent, distant and uncaring when He chooses to ignore our requests, but we know we must submit our will to His will for our lives. God might answer our prayers but as our holy Sovereign, He is entitled to ignore our requests. God ignored the prayers and fasting of King David when his baby son died. Notice, it was the Lord Who struck this baby so he died. 'God struck the child ... and it was very sick. David begged God for the child's life. David fasted and lay all night on the ground ... neither did he eat bread with the elders ... on the seventh day, the child died' (2 Samuel 12:15 to 18).

When we pray with the correct attitude, we can trust the Lord to work things out in the end. He will achieve what we cannot achieve. That is the hardest part – letting go and trusting God without feeling anxious. 'Which of you by being anxious can add to his height? If you are not able to achieve the least things why are you anxious about the rest?' (Luke 12:25 & 26). 'Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God' (Philippians 4:6). We can be absolutely certain, the Lord is not pacing the floors of heaven worrying about our problems! God is in control. We must not panic if the Lord takes His time answering our prayers. Be assured, when God wants to act He can take mere seconds. Other times He might take days or years. Once we pray we have to trust God to answer when He wants to, in the way He wants to but only if He wants to. Mary and Martha realised this when Lazarus was seriously ill then died. "Lord, if You had been here our brother would not have died but even now I know, whatever You ask of God, God will give You." ... Some of the mourners said, "Could this Man,

Who opened the eyes of the blind, not have kept Lazarus from dying?" (John 11:21, 22, 32 & 37). They all failed to realise Jesus used this situation to glorify God. Jesus said to Martha, "I told you, if you believed you would see God's glory" (John 11:40). When we trust God in a situation and see our prayers eventually answered, we can be prepared for God to say to us, "I told you so!"

When we faithfully serve the Lord with all our heart and when He allows utter devastation to bring our lives to ruin, it can be an overwhelming crash. All believers go through times when we feel God has let us down. What we need to do is put the situation into perspective. Perhaps the situation would have happened even if we did not know the Lord. For example, if a dedicated born-again Christian suffers a rare congenital, embryonic untreatable cancer that was inherited from a parent, that is not God letting that believer down. The cancer would have happened anyway because it was there at conception. However, walking with God gives hope. When the believer dies they will enjoy eternal life. As Christians, we need to fully understand, God sees life and death differently to humans. When a person, especially a child dies, many people, especially parents cannot emotionally recover. To see death through God's eyes puts an entirely different perspective on it. No person in the eyes of God is dead. All people, at whatever age they died are alive to Him. 'He is not the God of the dead but of the living for all people are alive to Him' (Luke 20:38). Knowing our loved one, especially a child is safe with God should help us let them go and rejoice in their child's new-found freedom from pain, especially if they were seriously ill. Death is not the end. It is the beginning of a new eternal life with God. When parents who have prayed for years to have a baby finally have their prayers answered and have a beautiful baby only for that child to die with an illness or accident can be devastating. But we need to understand the spirit of the child is not dead! The little body is dead, but if we hold on to our faith, we will see our child again. King David realised this when his baby son died after much prayer and fasting. 'Now he is dead why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him but he will not return to me' (2 Samuel 12:23). Sometimes the most talented of people, full of Godly potential die young, while wicked people may live for decades. We are all under the curse of death and it comes for some people sooner rather than later. The lifespan of every individual is God's choice. 'The righteous perish and no one lays it to heart. Merciful men are taken away, none considering the righteous are taken away from the evil to come. They enter into peace. They rest in their beds (graves) each one who walks in their uprightness' (Isaiah 57:1 & 2). 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His people' (Psalm 116:15). The Lord is saying the righteous are far better off in the eternal world because they will not experience the evil in this fallen world.

The expectation we have been given by the Bible is the fact we will all have problems, difficulties, pain, persecution and sorrow in this life, yet some Christians seem unable to accept that concept. Many people think God is so loving He never allows suffering and it is all the work of the devil. That attitude is completely opposite to what the Bible teaches so if you think that, you need to study what the Bible really says. It is the will of God for humans to suffer and that is something some Christians hate to hear and will deny it strenuously. Here are a few verses regarding suffering. 'I (the Lord) will show him (Paul) how many things he must suffer for My name's sake' (Acts 9:16). 'The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which will be revealed toward us' (Romans 8:18). 'All who desire to live Godly in Jesus will suffer persecution' (2 Timothy 3:12). 'It is better, if it is God's will, you suffer for doing well than for doing evil because Jesus suffered for our sins, the Righteous for the unrighteous' (1 Peter 3:17 & 18). 'Let them who suffer according to the will of God in doing good entrust their souls to Him as to a faithful Creator' (1 Peter 4:19). 'Do not be afraid of the things you are about to suffer ... Be faithful to death and I will give you the crown of life' (Revelation 2:10). The truth is, we will not be free of problems until we die. That is a fact. That is when God will reveal everything to us and nothing will be hidden (Matthew 10:26). Until then, 'You must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus' (2 Timothy 2:3). Our suffering may not make sense to us but it makes perfect sense to the Lord. God's timing is not the same as our timing. We cannot correct God because His ways are perfect. This earth and our time on it is short. We have to keep looking to our eternity, not the things of earth. Suffering is only on earth. Once we go to be with the Lord, all our suffering, tears, struggles and every other negative thing will be gone forever. He gives us peace. 'The Lord will wipe away tears off all faces' (Isaiah 25:8). 'God will wipe away from them every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more neither will there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more' (Revelation 21:4).

Amen and God bless you.

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