
Why do we Suffer?

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The book of Habakkuk the prophet of God.

Why must good people suffer? Why has suffering taken from us some good men and, good preachers and teachers good and pillars in the church, home to be with the Lord. Why is there so much suffering everywhere? Where is God in all this suffering? Why does He allow it if He has everything under control and is a good God? These are pasters questions being asked by everyone today, those with no faith or Christian conviction and even those that are true believers. There are books written on the subject, CD's and TV programmes made about the subject, studies and preaching's all doing their best to give us an answer. I don't propose to have the answer either, but I would like to offer my thoughts based on my experience with suffering over the past 21 years.

We have all heard these things said and maybe, just maybe, said them ourselves! "Oh no I believe God is in control! He knows, He understands!" We say still racked in pain and reaching for the painkillers! We dare not let the side down or let other Christians see we are weakening in our faith or show signs of questioning the Word of God. I know these are the questions asked because I've asked them myself!

Habakkuk had the same problem and he was a Prophet of God! The words "The burden which Habakkuk did see" in verse one tells us Habakkuk was able to intercede on behalf of the Jews but for him it was a burden of a different kind. The Chaldeans were a constant threat, apart from what he saw in his nation and round about him Habakkuk knew that difficult times were coming for Judah, and this problem was serious to the Prophet, but he heard nothing from God, absolutely nothing.

Verse 2.

O Lord, how long shall I cry, and you will not hear! Even cry out unto you of violence and you will not save!

This is the Lord God of heaven and earth he is speaking to and surely, he should show more respect. But Habakkuk was so frustrated at God's silence, inactivity and lack of help he tells the Lord as it is, or at least as Habakkuk thinks it is. Why was God so silent in view of all the oppression, robberies, violence, strife, lack of discipline and corrupt administration of justice?

He never thought God's silence may be because of all the rebellion toward God at that time.

Verse 6

They shall march through the breadth of the land to possess the dwelling places that are not theirs

Why did the Lord want to raise up the Chaldeans and let them march through the land and steal the possessions of its inhabitants? God recognised they were a terrible and dreadful people; they had

ignored the laws of Moses which were created to provide and keep God's children protected by their God. But they rebelled against their creator, His laws and His ways.

Habakkuk 1:3.

Why do you show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? For spoiling and violence are before me: and there are those who raise up strife and contention.

It disturbed Habakkuk, as it does most of us today, to see the absolute wickedness that man enjoys with no regard for God at all, to the point he complained to God about it in no uncertain terms. He became very disturbed and frustrated that God allowed him to be in the middle of all this violence and rebellion, he saw it first-hand. What Habakkuk seemed to forget was that all that he saw, God saw and was well aware of. God knew the Chaldeans would march through the land and take their houses and lands, destroy their Temple, and the best of the nation taken captive. Even more trouble and bad times were coming, and this trouble was to involve whole Empires like the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans, all chasing their own selfish desires and ignoring God altogether. All their big ambitions, and their big achievements were without thought of God. No wonder this concerned Habakkuk and disturbed his spirit, he knew his God was the answer but only if He was worshipped and obeyed, but He wasn't.

Verse 6

I will raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation,

Verse 7

They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves.

For the Lord to say they are a terrible and dreadful nation is saying something. He always tells the truth, so the Chaldeans were to be feared and avoided at all costs.

Verse 12

You have ordained them for judgment and, almighty God, you have established them for correction.

Believe it or not, as we suggested in our website study, the rebellious spirit behind the building of The Tower of Babel that Nimrod built and indeed the city of Babylon which Nimrod also built, and the sin behind both of these manmade ventures God would have to deal with. But again, God was ignored, and this has grown to become "The Spirit of Babylon" in all of us, which is the Spirit of Rebellion towards God. God created us with a will of our own we can choose what we believe, choose what we do and say, we can choose Jesus or Satan. You know following Jesus based on all He has done for mankind there is peace, happiness, goodness and blessing and eternal life if we accept Him as Saviour. Following Satan produces the world we live in now, full of war, strife and contention.

Yes, God said He would raise up people of strife and contention, why is that if not to draw our attention to the results of such behaviour and make us as frustrated as Habakkuk and call upon the Lord with repentance.

The Babylonians who were of the Gentile dominion and introduced the “Spirit of Babylon” onto the world and that wicked spirit is very much alive today. (see the web site). This “Spirit of Babylon” is born of Satan using the Nimrod and then Chaldeans, then the City of Babylon to promote sin in the hearts and lives of God’s creation. That Spirit has spread world-wide. The Bible says, “**there are those who raise up strife and contention.**” Why do they do that? What makes a man or woman want to spoil, destroy, kill, pull down and not build up and create? Because we have allowed that spirit of Babylon to take hold of us and rebel against Almighty God. Have you seen those on Television News being stirred up by the few until the whole crowd has become a frenzy, braking windows, setting fire to cars, tires, buildings, throwing stones even bombs into crowds of people? The day before some of that crowd were polite waiters serving you lunch, helping you choose a pair of shoes in the local shoe shop or serving you vegetables in Sainsburys! That bad Spirit is just below the surface in most of us and it belongs to Satan and it will take the power of the Holy Spirit to combat it.

Verse 12 tells us God has ordained these sinful, troublesome, wicked people for judgement and for correction. He allows what we do and what we suffer to bring us, our family, our neighbourhood, our nation to almost destruction to bring us to our knees not only to sanctify us but to bring us closer to Him, before He steps in to save us from ourselves. And sometimes even then, we ignore Him. I am astounded that after 2 years of fighting Covid and Omicron, and the billions spent, the lost businesses, lost jobs and so on, not even the church has united to give a lead and point the world to Christ who is the answer.

People I talk to do not believe me when I say things that are outside our control like Covid 19, or the Omicron viruses, the floods and fires that devastate mankind today, and unheard of when I was a lad at school, may well be allowed by the Lord to correct us and turn us back to God in repentance, and call on His name. “If He is a God of Love why doesn’t He stop these floods or these fires or this virus”. “And what about these poor children who are starving all over the world” We have heard this over and over again from people who will ignore Him most of the time We are quick to blame Him when these things affect us and inconvenient us. Has the church ever brought to the world the Bible verse in,

2 Chronicles 7:14

If My people, which are called by My Name shall humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Read that verse again, say each word slowly, pronounce each word clearly and let it get into your spirit. “Oh, don’t treat us like children Bill”. Why not, we all act like children when we ignore God’s

word staring us in the face with the answer we keep asking for. And note He is talking to us as believers, My People. God's people!

Just like God tried to correct the people in Noah's day, and in the days of Nimrod and again in the days of Pharaoh and the plagues or the time of the Children of Israel. God commissioned Prophets like Samuel, Elijah, Jonah and others to bring Israel back to God. But they said no thanks! "God is a God of love He would not punish us we are His people"! That's what they could have said in the days of Noah, and maybe they did but continued to sin and reject God. Man has removed himself so far from his God that whether we like it or not desperate measures are sometimes needed to bring us to our knees in repentance. Sometimes even then...!

No wonder Habakkuk was pleading with God to answer his prayers, and no wonder God was so disappointed with His people He did not answer. He gets frustrated too you know!

Take a look at something written long before our time.

"The history of man invariably shows moral failure and never shows the opposite.

This is a fact denied by fashionable religious teachers. God, in order to maintain relationship with his people, set up Priests, but they defiled His courts; He rose up Judges, but they became idolaters; He commissioned prophets but they, apart from Samuel, Elijah and Jonah showed partiality, self-will or rebellion. He introduced Kings and they nailed Him to a cross. As a result, Israel remains under wrath until the day when with broken and contrite heart they shall look on Him whom they have pierced. In that day a Government will be founded impossible of failure," (Williams)

Jeremiah17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it.

With a heart that is deceitful and not just wicked but desperately wicked what chance has man got without the help of the Lord and the Holy Spirit? Most men and women in the towns and cities being incited to violence are given over to Satan and the Lord is the last person on their minds.

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober (mentally self-controlled) be vigilant (awake and watchful;) because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour.

He is a very powerful enemy. We need the Holy Spirit to help and guide us, and fight with us but we have to ask him to fight with us, He won't do it on His own.

Let me tell you a little about myself so that you know I speak from experience about suffering and not from hearsay or what I have read in books. I retired from work in 1999 after some 44 years in Advertising when I began to get twinges of pain in my back. I am a graphic designer, so I did no heavy lifting or anything strenuous, I worked in London and know London well and I walked from the station through the back streets to save a lot of time, (and bus fare!). Gradually my back pains got worse but bearable. Some years later I left London and started my own Studio in Worthing and after 18 years of business in Worthing I retired and looked forward to retirement with my lovely wife Pauline, but my back was now more painful.

Pauline and I went to the Doctor who said, “your spine is very weak, but I can give you some painkillers to help you with the pain”. He also referred me to the hospital where I had a scan on my back and was told by the consultant that my spine was crumbling, and he showed us the pictures on his computer.

Pauline asked the consultant “that white line from the back of his head running down and stops partway down the back but doesn’t go all the way down, what is it and why has it stopped halfway down Bill’s back”? The consultant paused and said “that’s Bill’s spine and it is caught up and squashed in the middle of that lot” pointing to a black solid mess almost at the base of my back. He warned me of more pain, being unable to walk properly, walking sticks then wheelchairs, then not being able to walk at all. We had been taught in our church to reject that sort of stuff as it was from Satan himself, so we did, unknown to each other Pauline and I rejected what the consultant was saying to us in the name of Jesus right there in his office. That was over 25 years ago and guess what my pain and walking got worse.

It was about this time I started to study Ezekiel. There are 14 studies of Ezekiel and I did them for myself and I learned a lot. I showed them to a Bible teacher in my church and he said these should be available to the church and even on the Web. I talked with my Grandson who is a wizard at all things computer, and he designed a website and has put up 89 studies so far. There were times when I sat at my desk and cried with pain and called out to the Lord for relief, there were times when, like Habakkuk I got no response from Him at all. Pauline often came up to my study and prayed for me. There were other times when I could not understand the meaning of a verse and I said, “Lord unless you show me what you want to say here, I will have to leave it out”. The next morning as I sat at my desk again that verse jumped out at me, with the answer! I was able to understand it and I was able to continue, thank you Jesus that was the favour of the Lord. His Word is going around the world to help people understand the Bible.

I’ve got several walking sticks, I bought a push chair and when my wife found it too heavy to push me, I bought an electric wheelchair! The consultant was right I am now in a great deal of pain, got lots of walking sticks from the hospital, 1 pushchair, 2 electric chairs, one given to a needy gentleman in the church. Am I disappointed? Yes! Am I frustrated? Yes! Do I question God’s word? yes! Do I still love Jesus? After over 70 years a Christian or even 25 years of pain and suffering, oh yes indeed I still love Him! Something is wrong and in spite of everything I have experienced I know it’s not the fault of Jesus, He told us this sort of trouble would happen because of rebellion. Can you imagine the suffering you and I suffer and the people we have lost in pain? When, if we all worshipped and truly loved the Lord as we should. I know that all that the consultant and the doctor said and indeed the results that followed tempted me to become negative. You see I am a black or white person, if I say I

will do something I will do it even if it costs me. Don't say you will help, give, or be somewhere, if you don't or are unable to keep your word. When I read the Bible and it says "ask anything in my name and I will do it" I *expect Him to keep His word too. If He doesn't there has got to be a very good reason why. We'll find out why a little later.*

God has given us a free will. We are able to think for ourselves, have our own opinions and make our own decisions. We are an educated people, we are able to go to the moon, build offices and homes way up in the sky, the tallest building at the time of writing is 2,717 feet or 828m high. Man has invented and made a car that can reach over 316 mph. Not long ago a man had to walk in front of a car with a red flag, seems silly doesn't it? A country continually bombed by its enemies with over 22,000 missiles directed against them in the last 15 years, has created a defence system call the Iron Dome. They are placed all-round the nation, in open fields, in busy shopping areas and as soon as it detects a foreign rocket attack, they automatically send up a rocket that blasts the foreign body from the sky.

Can you imagine talking to Noah as he was building the Ark (which was half the size of the Titanic, but a lot more seaworthy) and telling him that one day man will walk on the moon. Can you imagine what he would say? But to you and I that is now history.

Job's friends

The book of Job is reconned to be the oldest book in the world written by Moses (Luke 24:27,44) It explains why good men are afflicted which is to bring about their Sanctification. An interesting point is that this question of suffering should be the first to be dealt with.

Job was commended by God himself for his uprightness, his fear of the Lord, and hatred of evil. He had done nothing to warrant what happened to him, in fact Job's troubles started when God introduced him to Satan the man of sin. In the Hebrew the definite article comes before Satan, so it reads "The Satan" this implies the "top man" the "Master of evil" stood talking to God. If you want to know more about this troublemaker look up the study "Satan's Ambition" on the web site.

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1 Peter 5:8 says **Satan searches the whole earth like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.** So, he wants to deceive all of us, in any way he can to rebel against God and put ourselves first and not God. And the trouble is we let him do it! We rebel, we go our own way, do our own thing and not involve God at all. Yes, I know sometimes we can do it on our own, going 316 mph in a car is no small matter, but maybe God has something bigger and more important for us, but we don't ask Him. After all He can turn water into wine and get water out of a rock, and He can feed 5000 people with only 5 small loaves and 2 small fish!

Habakkuk 2.:1

I will stand upon my watch and set me upon the tower and will watch to see what He will say to me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.

In Habakkuk's day it was common to have a watch tower on or near your house from which a man would look out to see the enemy approach. The prophet would also use the tower to pray and listen for the Lord to speak. Unlike the prophets of today a conversation with the Lord was much more common. God said to Habakkuk **write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run who reads it.** In other words, treat the Word of God with all seriousness, write it down use all haste in making it known.

Verse 3

For the vision is yet for an appointed time but at the end it shall speak, and not lie, though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

This vision God speaks of is the Second Coming of Christ (Heb:10:37) However this verse can also pertain to a promised thing by the Lord for our lives but it may be long delayed. I have suffered pain for 22 years now, many others have suffered much longer. Often, in this world of ours we expect our answer Now! Immediately! If not sooner! Jesus said. **At the end it shall speak and not lie, though it tarry wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry.**

This verse tells us that, though we are in pain the answer to a contrite prayer is on the way! Jesus said so. **At the end it shall speak.** The original says it shall breathe, it is His Word, it has life and in the fulness of time, which is in God's hands not ours, it will fulfil its purpose, fulfil His promise and make all things whole. In the meantime, God requires of us Faith. Faith to believe His Word, Faith to believe He really is in control and we must exercise our faith and work with Him to bring His word to pass. **It shall be at the end when it shall speak and not lie. God says He will not lie. He says if we want it, we must wait for it. He says it will surely come. He says it will not tarry.** Here again is the full answer, it may not be when we want it, it may not come immediately with the laying on of hands, it may tarry for God's time, but He said it will surely come!

Unfortunately, God's timing is not ours, I want relief from pain now! Oh, how I want it, then He reminds me "that's nothing to the pain and suffering I took for you Bill together for the whole world" We forget we must work with Him, join in His suffering, be a part of it, to endure and encourage fellow sufferers who are also suffering, and in the middle of our pain still give Him all the glory and praise.

So, I trust the Holy Spirit has shown you our suffering stems from the wicked one Satan. He wants us to rebel against the Lord. If we rebel, we criticise, blame, condemn, we become negative, we become blind to what God is doing and deaf to what He is saying, and that is just what Satan wants.

Be blessed

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