

Hope in a Painful World

(Psalm 66)

- Introduction:
1. If God loves me, why did he allow this to happen to me?
 2. People who have been devastated by grief, pain, and loss frequently ask this question.
 3. In fact, this question may be the most problematic question atheists can pose to believers in God.
 - a. Are you prepared to adequately answer it?
 - b. If God is all-knowing, and
 - c. If God is all-good, and
 - d. If God is all powerful,
 - e. Then pain should not exist.
 4. But before one gives up on God, who is despairing because of pain, suffering, and loss, he needs to consider more than his temporal experience and perspective. An eternal perspective will vindicate our Holy and Just God.

I. The Heart of the Message

- A. God allows his children to experience suffering (Psalm 66:10-12).
 1. (Psalm 66:10-12).
 2. This truth is not evidence against the goodness of God, or even his existence.
 3. Suffering can be remedial.
 - a. Suffering can refine our character.
 - b. Suffering can cause us to question our values.
 - c. Suffering can cause us to clarify the purpose of our existence.
 4. (Psalm 119:67-71).
- B. God supports his children while they are suffering (Psalm 66:19-20).
 1. The fact that one suffers through trials is not proof of God's abandonment.
 2. Quite the contrary, it may be evidence that God is using you to be a beacon of light to those who are groping for God in the darkness of this world (Philippians 2:15).
 3. Through suffering, we may be able to glorify God (Matthew 5:16).
 - a. Who was Noah without the flood?
 - b. Who was Job without tragedy?
 - c. Who was Hannah without her tears?
 - d. Who was Daniel without his lion's den?
 - e. Who was Stephen without the stones?
 - f. Who was Paul without his persecutions?
 - g. And who can remember Jesus without his cross?

4. All of these people endured hardship, loss, and brokenness, yet their sufferings helped shape their identities and proved to be avenues through which they were able to glorify God.
- C. God rewards his children who remain faithful in suffering (Psalm 66:12).
 1. God never promised us heaven on earth, but heaven after earth (Revelation 21:1-4).
 2. According to Paul, heaven will surely be worth it all (2 Cor. 4:17).
 3. While we navigate our pain, suffering, and loss, we need to remember it is but for a season, and during that season, God's grace will be sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9).

II. Things to Remember When Called Upon to Suffer

- A. God's presence gives us calm.
 1. (Isaiah 41:10) Fear not for I am with you.
 2. (Matthew 28:19-20).
 3. Ills. of getting separated as a child.
- B. God's providence gives us comfort.
 1. (Romans 8:28).
 2. Providence – provide-ance.
 3. God's fingerprints are everywhere.
 - a. (Genesis 50:20) Joseph.
 - b. (Esther 4:14) Esther.
 - c. (Exodus 34:23-24) Children of Israel.
- C. God's perspective gives us context.
 1. If we could see as God sees, our perspective would surely change our priorities for the better.
 2. John Keats – This world is a "vale of soul-making."
 3. Alfred Brumley – "This world is not my home I'm just a passing through. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.
 4. How do we measure what is good and what is bad?
 5. (2 Kings 22:19-20) King Josiah.

- Conclusion:
1. Brethren, I stand before you today as a broken man, but God can use my brokenness (Psalm 51:17).
 2. The hope I have in the midst of my pain and loss is best summed up by the words of Joseph – "God will make us forget all our toil" (Genesis 41:51).
 3. Should I get angry with God and turn my back on Jesus because of my trials? Absolutely, not! To whom would I go? Jesus has the words of eternal life!