

The Value Of Difficult Days

Introduction. One of the greatest challenges to faith is also one of the harder questions of life. How can a loving God allow for suffering in our world?

Before we begin, we must acknowledge that there are some elements that we may not understand — elements that have not been revealed to us (Deuteronomy 29:29). We must be careful to examine what God has said, and not make any assumptions beyond what is written (1 Corinthians 4:6). We also must be careful not to look to empty philosophies or rash answers.

Is there hope of understanding these difficulties in life and seeing their value? Certainly there is, with patience and the knowledge of God's word. Let's look to the word of God and see if we can find the knowledge of truth that will encourage our faith, despite the difficulty of our present days.

I. Does Suffering Contradict A Loving God?

- A. Some have argued that human suffering proves that God cannot exist. We need to understand that the source of suffering does not come from God (Luke 13:16). All that God provided for our existence was "good" (Genesis 1:31).
- B. So, the question must be, "What caused all of this goodness to change?" All was well with the world, until man exercised his free will.
 - 1. In Genesis 3:1-7, Eve and then Adam used this freedom to choose sin. This ability of choice opened the door to suffering (Genesis 3:16-17).
 - 2. Some of the ill-effects spoken of in that context were pain in childbirth, toil of working through life, and physical ailments and death. The greatest problem is that man has continued to open this door (Romans 5:12).
- C. The fact that we know a standard of "goodness" at all is important to our faith. Any person who condemns the idea of God's existence based on the presence of human suffering must admit the reality between "good" and "evil". There could be no such judgment made by anyone who does not recognize some standard of good and an ultimate good. You and I recognize ultimate good as God — the provider of goodness (James 1:17).

II. Is There Any Value In Difficult Days?

- A. What good is harvested from the fields of human suffering? We should not expect to understand everything about our present sufferings, but over time perhaps we can see more clearly their reason. It is truly tragic if we only focus on the suffering and do not see the good that resulted.
- B. The life of Joseph proves the validity of this point.
 - 1. He was the victim of cruel hate and sold by his brothers to be a slave (Genesis 37:18-28). He was bought as a slave by Potiphar and transported to Egypt (Genesis 39:1) where he became prominent in Potiphar's house (Genesis 39:2).
 - 2. He was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and imprisoned (Genesis 39:19-20). He came to know men from the courts of Pharaoh (Genesis 40:1-4), but he was betrayed and left in prison, forgotten by the one whom he

- had helped (Genesis 40:23). Then it was his relationship with Pharaoh's butler that brought Joseph into Pharaoh's presence (Genesis 41:9-14).
3. Joseph was embraced by Pharaoh and became second in charge of the whole nation (Genesis 41:37-45). This then provided for the preservation of his brothers during the great famine (Genesis 42:1-47:12).
 4. Then all of this together established the Israelite nation and they multiplied greatly (Exodus 1:1-7). Ultimately, the temporary sufferings of Joseph provided for the salvation of mankind through the preservation of the lineage of Jesus (Matthew 1:1-16).
- C. The greatest benefits ever afforded to mankind, which is relief from sin (Hebrews 10:22-28) and spiritual separation from God (Romans 6:23), came through the suffering of Jesus (Isaiah 53:4-6; Matthew 27:27-50).

III. Embracing Real Faith In Difficult Days

- A. Suffering should not be seen as destructive, but as beneficial.
1. It is the world's faulty assumption that happiness is the greatest good in life. To shield us from suffering would be to rob us of the good that can come from suffering (1 Peter 5:10).
 - a) We become aware that there is a better place (Hebrews 11:16).
 - b) We remember that life is temporary (Ecclesiastes 12:1-7; James 4:14).
 - c) We are more mindful of the need for repentance (Jonah 2:1-4), of the need of salvation (Luke 23:39-43; Acts 16:25-33), and of the strength of our faith (1 Peter 1:6-9; Revelation 2:10).
 2. Difficult days develop character and increase hope (Romans 5:1-5). God said that His strength is made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).
 3. It is our reaction to suffering, rather than the suffering itself, that determines whether the experience is one of blessing or of blight.
- B. You should embrace three real, crucial truths:
1. Mortal life is not the end of our existence (Hebrews 9:27).
 2. God does care (1 Peter 5:7) but is also completely just in allowing us to have freedom of choice and its consequences (Romans 6:16-18).
 3. There is no ultimate tragedy that can befall a Christian. If we die, we are prepared to enter into a better place (Luke 16:22; Philippians 1:23-24).

Conclusion. Part of the experience of this world is difficult days. People will continue to believe they could improve on this world's design. The truth is that suffering, pain, and death have their place. If we never suffered in any way, we would all be spoiled and self-centered. God sometimes has to put us on our backs in order to make us look up. But never forget that God is the greatest sufferer of all (Isaiah 53:3; Hebrews 2:18; 4:15).

The point of this world is not the comfort of mortal life but rather a training ground for the soul (Acts 17:26-27; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18). It is the trials of life that strengthen us and produce a willing consent to choose good rather than evil. Embrace the faith that says, "It is better to be in Heaven than here" (Romans 8:18). Today, are you prepared to embrace eternal hope? Do not face the world on your own; life is too hard without God. Seek your salvation right now.