

THE NATURE OF SUFFERING

Hebrews 12:1-11

INTRODUCTION: We can easily understand why the wicked should suffer: Proverbs 13:15; Isaiah 48:22. But when an obedient son or daughter of God suffers we sometimes have real trouble understanding our Lord's plan. This is especially true when we read Hebrews 12:5-7 and see words used like Discipline, rebuke, punishment, hardship and pain.

I. WHAT CAUSES SUFFERING?

What causes all the suffering in this world? One of the atheist greatest arguments against the reality of God is that of the suffering in this world. We wonder where is God in all this suffering? Romans 8:18-25. Our God has subjected the entire creation to suffering and frustration because of man's sin: Romans 8:21. One day our God has a plan to end all our present suffering and create a new life without suffering: Revelation 21:1-4. In the mean time we don't want to waste our sufferings now. God has a plan to bless us in and through our suffering.

II. WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE?

The very first book written in the Bible was written to answer the question: Why do good people suffer? Job 1:8. Why would God mention Job to Satan and allow Job to suffer? Job's friends all said it was because of sin in Job's life. It was because God still had some things for Job to learn that he could only learn in the school of suffering. Even our Lord Jesus learned in that same way: Hebrews 5:7-9. It was the Lord's will to make Jesus suffer: Isaiah 53:6-11. There are some things that can only be learned in the school of suffering: Hebrews 12:1-13. Why do bad things happen to good people? It is because God is bringing His children to Christ-likeness through our suffering: James 1:2-4: James 1:2-4. J. B. Phillip's translation. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; John 15:18-21; Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 3:10-12.

III. SINCE SUFFERING IS INEVITABLE FOR BOTH THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE UNRIGHTEOUS WHY SHOULD WE BE RIGHTEOUS?

We suffer for one of three reasons: 1. For doing wrong. 2. For doing right. 3. For no apparent reason. When we suffer for doing wrong it is wise to take the correctio of our heavenly Father and correct course: 2 Corinthians 7:10-13. When we suffer for doing right our God says Do not change course! 1 Peter 4:12-19. When we suffer for no apparent reason, realize God has promised to never allow you to be tempted beyond what you can endure by His grace: 1 Corinthians 10:11-13. We need to be careful not to push God to end our times of suffering. Rather, we need to ask God to teach us every lesson He intends for us during our times of suffering lest we have to go down that same road again to learn the lessons our Teacher has in mind to make us more like our Lord Jesus who learned obedience from the things He suffered.