

The Living God Ministries

"A Ministry of Reconciliation"

2 Corinthians 5:17-20

PO Box 2784. Eugene, Oregon 97402

Phone: (541) 461-3337

Email: billgloverlgm@comcast.net

“WHY, OH GOD, WHY?”

by

Bill Glover

Tragedy strikes and we find ourselves crying out to God: “Why, oh God, Why? Why did this tragedy happen to me? After all, I believe and trust in you and yet you allowed this terrible thing to happen to me! I pray for your intervention and yet you do not hear and answer! Why?”

The above scenario is something we can all identify with regularly. We truly believe we are trusting God and serving Him faithfully and yet bad things happen to us. Why? Then we struggle maintaining faith in Him. If God really loves us then why do we not receive the answer to our prayers? How can we maintain a faith in Him when He does not answer us? Let us deal with these questions from the point of view of the Scriptures. We definitely can find the answers there.

Hebrews 11:6 is the first scripture we must evaluate in searching for the answer to this question. The very first obstacle we must deal with is WHETHER OR NOT GOD ACTUALLY EXISTS! If there is no God then anyone would be foolish to try and have faith in a non-existent God! [Anyone who needs help in proving the existence of God should request an article on the subject]. The key here is KNOWING that God exists and that He rewards those who dedicatedly seek Him.

Next we should evaluate 2 Timothy 3:16-17 where God says: “All scripture is God breathed and is useful (profitable) for *teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness*, SO THAT THE MAN OF GOD (a true Christian) MAY BE THOROUGHLY EQUIPPED FOR EVERY GOOD WORK.” [NOTE: This article is directed to those who at least *claim* to believe in God. We must deal with doubters and disbelievers in another forum]. Before reading further each person should candidly ask himself if he is *willing* and *able* to study the scriptures quoted herein for his or her teaching, rebuking, correcting and instruction in righteousness. How many “Christians” do you know who actually look to the Bible for their teachings, for rebuking, for correction and for training in righteousness? In my years in the church I have found many people who claim they are *willing* and *able* to view the scriptures for these reasons and benefits but when something comes up that calls their actions or attitude into question they become defensive and even argumentative. In many instances, individuals begin to attribute motives rather than determine if there is anything they can learn from these scriptures. Isaiah 66:2 should be the governing text here. We should determine if we have a humble and contrite (converted) heart and attitude and if we actually TREMBLE at God’s word. Many have thought that I personally have “misjudged” them when in fact I have not allowed myself to even attempt to

“judge” them. My job, as a minister, is to be a SOUNDING BOARD so as to try and help others see what God wants them to see. God does not allow any of us to judge another. If we do then we are sinning against God. Since I too am human then the scenarios I offer may NOT be the “exact” point God wants one to see but hopefully God’s Spirit will open minds to envision what God is doing with these trials we face.

The next scripture to be considered carefully is Hebrews 11:6 which reads: “Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him MUST BELIEVE THAT HE EXISTS AND THAT HE REWARDS THOSE WHO EARNESTLY SEEK HIM.” The apostle James picks up the thought in, James 1:6-8, which reads:” But when he asks (when we petition God), HE MUST BELIEVE, AND NOT DOUBT because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should NOT think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does!” Please remember, these are GOD’S WORDS - - not mine!

But people will claim “I do that - - I pray earnestly to God, I trust Him and follow His instructions found in James 5:14 and yet He does not hear and answer.” We can often convince ourselves that it must be the fault of the minister who anointed us - - he must not be very close to God for God is not hearing his prayers! If he truly is a man of God then my sickness would be healed immediately just like happened during New Testament times. Then we lose what little faith we thought we had in the beginning. We actually find that what we had was “HOPE” - - hope that God would heal - - and NOT real tangible **BELIEVING** faith. We can easily reason “Well, I followed God’s instructions in James 5:14 and it did not work so I must seek help somewhere else.” We can easily GIVE UP ON GOD so that He then chooses not to intervene for us FOR OUR OWN GOOD - - so we can learn faith and patience (James 1:2-8)!

At this point let us go a little further in James, chapter 1. Verse 12 states: “Blessed is the man who PERSEVERES UNDER TRIAL, because WHEN HE HAS STOOD THE TEST, HE WILL RECEIVE **THE CROWN OF LIFE THAT GOD HAS PROMISED TO THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.**” Did you notice that this verse does NOT state that you will automatically and immediately receive healing or other physical things? But notice what it DOES say. It states emphatically that we will receive “**THE CROWN OF LIFE THAT GOD HAS PROMISED TO THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.**” If what we are seeking from God is our PHYSICAL NEEDS rather than what we need SPIRITUALLY then we are missing the point. Our goal should be to SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND **THEN** all the physical things will be added (Matthew 6:25-34). Then verse 13 states: “When tempted, no one should say ‘God is tempting me,’ for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone.” We can be tempted to LOOSE OUR FAITH AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD by placing priorities on our physical needs and by pursuing these needs from sources other than God.

Let us return to Hebrews 11 again. In verse 13 we find: “All these people were still **living** BY FAITH when they **died**. They DID NOT receive the things promised but only saw and welcomed them from a distance.” Then verse 16 says “Instead, they were longing for a better country” (resurrection - - verse 35). Then verses 39 and 40 shows why this happened to people who were faithfully serving God. A very careful study of Hebrews 11 shows that God at times will allow His true followers to be killed (even violently) in order that eventually God will be glorified.

God knows that our fleshly existence is ONLY TEMPORARY and that He is training and refining us for immortality in His family as His sons (as we will see later in this article).

I have heard reasoning expressed as: “Since God does not answer and heal the sickness, we are driven to doctors!” Is this reasoning what James is referring to in verses 14-15 about being tempted to resort to *measures other than* COMPLETE trust and faith in God? And what about verses 22-25? Do they not apply in this case? Is it God who is forcing us to turn to other sources such as doctors for help? [Note: you should request my article on Healing to see what God says on this subject.] Have we considered how God feels when we look to other sources for our needs? Is that possibly putting something or someone else before or, in the place of, God? We can easily become like Job who blamed and found fault with God (or others) for his own lack of understanding rather than trust what God is doing through the trials he faced.

We can learn from the life of Asa, King of Judah. 2 Chronicles 15 and part of chapter 16 show that Asa turned to and served God and God did many mighty works on his behalf. But, in time, Asa began to rely on his own abilities and opinions and actually turned to a gentile king for help rather than God. God sent a prophet to Asa to tell him where he was wrong and Asa became so enraged at God’s messenger (NOT AT HIMSELF for his own short comings) for telling him the truth about his idolatrous actions that he had him thrown into prison (2 Chronicles 16:7-10). Then Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet (obviously a deadly infection). Rather than turning to and trusting the God he had known and served, he chose to ignore God and seek help from the physicians. So God let him die of this disease. Later in this article we will consider another king who *chose* to trust God, and God alone, when he was at the very point of death and God added fifteen years to his life.

We should now return to Hebrews 11 for further information on this subject. Verse 1 reads: “Now faith is BEING SURE OF what we hope for (our request to God) **AND CERTAIN OF WHAT WE DO NOT SEE!** The rest of Hebrews 11 cites many examples of those who TOTALLY COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO GOD and how their lives turned out since God *allowed* many to be martyred for their faith in Him. We must always keep in mind that God is the MASTER POTTER and He is the one who is equipping us for A SPECIFIC JOB in His family (as we will see later in this article). If God chooses to allow us to die **WHILE FAITHFULLY SERVING HIM** then we should patiently allow Him to equip us for His family - - “If we are children (of God), then we are heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, **if indeed we share in His sufferings IN ORDER THAT WE MAY ALSO SHARE IN HIS GLORY!**” Romans 8:17).

We need to study these examples very carefully. Some of these individuals mentioned in Hebrews 11 were truly serving the Almighty God and yet He allowed them to suffer horribly by inhumane treatment and ultimate death. We find it difficult to realize that a loving God would cause His true people to endure such suffering and deaths. We tend to convince ourselves that once we become Christians God then has an obligation to spare us from trials and tests - - that God will spare us from having severe trials and tests but rather we will have only smooth sailing because we claim “I am now a **Christian**” - - that being a profession of following Jesus Christ exempts us from trials and tribulations. We can easily fail to remember that God is the one working with us and in us and knows what we need to be equipped for the specific job He has for

us in His family (Philippians 2:12-13). Please study carefully Hebrews 12:2-13. Pay careful attention to verses 10-11 which read: "God disciplines us FOR OUR GOOD SO THAT WE CAN SHARE IN HIS GLORY. . . no discipline seems pleasant AT THE TIME but painful but later on it produces a HARVEST OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN TRAINED BY IT." These verses should cause us to reevaluate our reaction to discipline from God.

DISCIPLES VS. DISCIPLINE

Have we ever compared the word *disciple* with the word *discipline*? Do we see the similarity? A true follower of Jesus Christ has become a disciple. We normally *limit* the true meaning of the word to that of "follower." But so much more is meant by calling us "disciples." A study of the original Hebrew and Greek words used for "chastise, discipline and disciple" show the actual meaning of what God is saying and what He wants from us. Even without using the Hebrew and Greek words used in the bible we can readily grasp what God is saying when we compare the word "disciple" with the word "discipline." To be a true "disciple" (follower) of Christ you must be a truly "disciplined" person. And, as Paul explained clearly in Romans 8:17, no one can truly be a SON OF GOD, AN HEIR OF GOD AND A JOINT HEIR WITH CHRIST UNLESS HE OR SHE EXPERIENCES THE SUFFERING THAT COMES WITH DISCIPLINE. Remember 2 Timothy 3:16 where we find that the scriptures (the Bible) has been give to and preserved for OUR DISCIPLINE AND CORRECTION AS WELL AS TRAINING AND TECHING! When we look to the Bible for our discipline we can then "consider it a joy" when trials come knowing that the product of these trials is the development of God's true character in us.

We can easily become like Job and begin to whine and complain over trials that God allows **FOR OUR OWN SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**. We tend to forget **WHY** we are in this weak flesh. And we forget that Jesus **LEARNED BY THE THINGS HE SUFFERED** (Compare Hebrews 5:8 with Isaiah 38:17) When trials come, especially severe trials, we tend to lose our faith in God - - we tend to begin thinking that God has abandoned us! Yet trials are supposed to bring us closer to God by teaching us to truly trust Him for everything - - including our human lives and well being. Notice verse 13 which states: "All these people **WERE STILL LIVING BY FAITH** when they died (these horrible deaths). **THEY DID NOT RECEIVE THE THINGS PROMISED; THEY ONLY SAW THEM AND WELCOMED THEM FROM A DISTANCE** (a time lapse from the time of their suffering and their reward). **AND ADMITTED THAT THEY WERE ALIENS AND STRANGERS** (in this present evil world) **ON EARTH.**" As verse 16 shows, they were looking forward to **A BETTER COUNTRY - - A BETTER REWARD - - A BETTER RESURRECTION**" - - that crown of eternal life(verse 35). We tend to forget that the **ONLY** way we will be glorified with Christ and become the literal **SPIRIT COMPOSED SONS OF GOD** is **IF WE SUFFER WITH HIM** (Romans 8:17 again). As James says (James 1:12) **AFTER** we have withstood the trials and tests, we receive "THE CROWN OF LIFE that God has promised to those who love Him."

It is strongly recommended that each of you reading this article take much time and study Hebrews 11 in its entirety word by word. This is especially important to those who are struggling because their prayers have not **YET** been answered. If you are one of these **then there is a specific reason** why God has delayed the answer (even if you momentarily do not want to know this reason) and it is still your personal responsibility to learn why **FROM GOD**. None of

us can learn this FOR another person. Salvation, as well as healing, is a PERSONAL MATTER BETWEEN EACH INDIVIDUAL AND God. Each person must work out his or her own salvation (through Jesus Christ) and do it with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12-13).

God does not go about performing supernatural miracles just to impress humans or to try to convert them since He is NOT attempting or intending to convert everyone at this time. When God delays an answer, HE IS NOT PUNISHING US OR GIVING US A “BADGE OF HONOR.” Rather, He is taking the time and putting forth the effort to refine our character by giving us a deeper understanding of what He is doing in our lives. The Bible is clear in stating that Jesus LEARNED by the things He suffered in the flesh so He could be a just and compassionate high priest. Likewise, as SONS OF GOD we too, learn compassion and mercy by what we suffer here and now in the flesh. If we resent the trials that God allows to come on us then we are actually resenting God equipping us for His family. This is NECESSARY training so that we can be ready to rule with Him during the millennium (see Revelation 20:4-6, Chapter 5:8-10 and 1 Corinthians 6:2-3). If we chafe under the trials that come our way then it is obvious we do not actually understand or grasp what God is doing in and through our lives. We just do not GET IT! We are to learn how to “COUNT IT JOY” when we have trials (James 1:2-8) knowing and fully realizing and grasping what these trials are doing for our inner character. These trials are NOT joyous of and by themselves but what is joyous is the fact they are being used by God to turn us into **HIS SONS!** If we truly understood what God is doing then we are able to LOOK BEYOND the momentary pain in the flesh to the end product - - immortality in the very family of God. This is THE ONLY WAY into that family! If we allow the sufferings in the flesh to get us down then obviously we do not really grasp what God is doing in and through us!

Some will claim “If I could only experience a supernatural miracle THEN I would have faith.” We have already considered Hebrews 11:1. Perhaps we should review it again and apply it to ourselves so as to be corrected by the word of God and to teach us about faith and as a rebuke for our lack of faith and for instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17 again).

Some may reason that if the minister is truly a man of God and if he is living the life he should then, God will honor his requests in every case without exception. Such was NOT even the case with Jesus Christ. He had total and complete faith in God and all the power of the universe available to Him. Yet, in Matthew 13:58 and Mark 6:5-6 we find that Jesus Christ Himself COULD NOT perform many miracles because of a lack of faith on the part of the people. God does NOT force healing or other blessings on wayward human beings.

Also, in 2 Timothy 4:20 we find that the apostle Paul (a man KNOWN for many miracles and healings) LEFT Trophimus sick in Miletus. Why did Paul not immediately pronounce him “healed” before he sailed away? Obviously the fault was NOT with God nor was it with Paul. God chose not to reveal the specific reason in this case. However, through many other scriptures we can readily know there were lessons to be learned. What we can know for sure is that God had NOT abandoned Paul. I personally believe that God was working with Trophimus in a particular area of his life and was using this sickness to grant him a better understanding of the lesson involved (as was true with Job). The fact that God had not at that point healed him does not mean that he was a terrible “Christian” or that he was unfaithful to God in other ways. What

we should derive from this example is that WE ARE ALL A WORK IN PROGRESS. We all have areas where we need to grow and overcome. We should NOT attribute wrongness or even weakness to Trophimus or toward each other who have personal trials and tests. Our job and our responsibility is to pray for a person who is suffering through trials and troubles. If any of us find ourselves looking down on someone struggling with trials then God could well find it is necessary to allow something even worse to come on us to teach us lessons in love, mercy and Godly character.

Let us at this point consider Job and his trials. By God's own personal admission, Job was a "good person," Just and upright. God did NOT fault Job for his "outward" appearance and conduct. Job's three friends were searching for some overt and horrible sin - - looking on the "outside." Job knew that he was not guilty of such sins. It is clear that Job did not at first understand HOW and WHY God deals with His human sons. Actually Job had a very serious attitude problem - - he was self righteous and spiritually vain - - HAD INTERNAL SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS. He also had much self pity and resisted any comment that would somehow call into question *his opinion of himself*. He did not understand that God LOOKS ON THE HEART and not outward appearance and human accomplishments! Job convinced himself that he did not deserve such treatment from God. He even claimed that God eventually would be forced to admit He made a mistake by allowing these trials. Thankfully Job was finally able to come down off his pedestal of self righteousness and repent and God then was able to work with and heal him and then to restore his life more abundantly than before. Please note that God did NOT heal Job nor restore his wealth UNTIL Job was *willing* and *able* to humble himself and stop finding fault with God and the way God was working with him.

We need to realize that there is a scripture in the Bible somewhere that will clarify any and all circumstances we encounter as humans. One of the greatest examples of this is found in Isaiah 38 and 2 Kings 20. We will use Isaiah 38 for this study. Please note that God commissioned Isaiah the prophet to deliver to Hezekiah his DEATH SENTENCE. The Almighty God said "You are going to die!" What did Hezekiah do? Did he say "Why, Oh God, Why?" or "Oh, woe is me!" Or, "Please pity me for I have received a death sentence from God!" Or, "God is going to cause me to die when He knows I trust and serve Him faithfully!" Actually Hezekiah's response to God was rather profound. The first thing he did was turn his face to the wall. This means he DIVERTED HIS ATTENTION AWAY FROM ANY AND ALL **OUTSIDE INTERFERENCES** and sought DIRECT CONTACT WITH GOD! He KNEW that this was a situation totally *between him and God alone*. That the decree came FROM GOD and was sure and that it was his responsibility to *deal directly with God* regarding this trial and that he must approach God with total respect and humility and NOT out of self pity and human justification.

Hezekiah was very well acquainted with God and His word. And he was serving God faithfully and diligently at the time and yet God suddenly said "You are going to die!" Let us notice 2 Kings 18:5-7. Here we find that: "Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. He held fast to the Lord and did not cease to follow Him; he kept the commands the Lord had given Moses. And the Lord was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook." Yet, all of a sudden (though he was diligently serving God) he was given a death sentence by the very God he was serving. Now tell me; DID THAT MAKE ANY SENSE? Let us notice that such DID NOT MAKE

SENSE TO HEZEKIAH EITHER. And *he took the matter up with God personally* - - the same as we can and must take such a matter up with God personally and God will answer us as He did Hezekiah IF WE ARE **WILLING** TO ACCEPT GOD'S ANSWER!

The very first thing Hezekiah did (once he turned his face to the wall and shut out all interferences) was TO APPEAL TO GOD'S MERCIES (Isaiah 38:2). Next we find that he displayed a HUMBLE AND CONTRITE heart because he wept bitterly before God. With the humble and contrite heart and in genuine weeping he reminded God of the FACT that he had been serving God to the best of his ability in wholehearted faithfulness and devotion.

It is asked that each of you carefully and prayerfully study every word of verses 2-20 on your own during your personal Bible study. Notice that he BOLDLY REASONED WITH GOD and in so doing put forth some excellent points that *definitely got God's attention*. [Note: we each have the personal responsibility to learn why we are NOT getting God's attention when God delays the answer to our prayers] Please note that this was NOT a long and drawn out prayer. Notice how QUICKLY God answered his prayer. Isaiah was still in the inner court when God told him to return and tell Hezekiah that his prayer had already been heard and that GOD HAD CHANGED HIS MIND and that he would live another fifteen years because he had totally surrendered to God without reservations or justifications. Isaiah learned from God's IMMEDIATE answer to Hezekiah's prayer for in Isaiah 65:24 we find God heard Hezekiah's prayer while he was still praying. Compare this text with Daniel 9:21-23.

Let us now go back to Isaiah 38 again for a most important point. In verse 17 Hezekiah states very clearly: "**SURELY IT WAS FOR MY BENEFIT THAT I SUFFERED THIS ANGUISH.**" There is tremendous meaning in this statement and most people cannot seem to accept that the trials we face are FOR OUR OWN BENEFIT. This reminds me of one of the first major lessons God taught me when I was first ordained. There was this older lady in the church that had a heart problem. She had been anointed many times for this problem and each time she got "relief" but was NOT healed. When I was ordained it became my turn to anoint her (James 5:14). About the fourth time she called on me (in a matter of days), I realized she was only getting "relief" and not healing. As a minister it was my responsibility to point this out to her. I then advised her that God does NOT work this way with His people - - that He does NOT "tease" any with temporary "relief" rather than granting full healing. That if she continued to call on me for the anointing I would ASK GOD **WHY** she was only getting "relief" and not healing. She enthusiastically said "Oh, please do that as I want to know!"

I prayed about it as I was called back to anoint her about four more times. God answered that prayer and gave me the answer. The next time she called on me I had the responsibility of telling her what God had revealed - - that she was not truly exercising faith but merely going through the process God has outlined in James 5:14. That when the minister laid hands on her forehead and placed the oil there she "felt" she had "obeyed" God and as a result she "*had done her part*" and this made her feel good about herself so she was able to relax and her body began to function normally (she got "relief"). But that such was NOT the healing that we sought. It was true that she had "done her part" humanly and physically but had overlooked the fact God uses trials to REFINE OUR CHARACTER FROM THE INSIDE OUT.

Once I explained THAT SHE WAS NOT EXERCISING TRUE BELIEVING FAITH, she became very upset and actually cried saying: “Here I am older than you and have been in the church longer than you and you are telling me I am not exercising faith.” In reality she was *substituting* TOKEN OBEDIENCE to the requirement of Sabbath keeping and being anointed and other technical points with **EXERCISING TRUE BELIEVING FAITH**. I had to spend time consoling her and asking her to pray over this to SEE IF THERE IS ANYTHING GOD WANTED YOU TO KNOW ABOUT THIS POINT - - whether there was something in her very character and nature that God was dealing with. She had at least three other incidents and called on me and I faithfully prayed for and anointed her and, each time, she again got “relief.” Then on the fourth anointing she said (as I arrived) “There is something I need to say to you before you anoint me.” She then said that God had revealed to her that she had not been exercising true believing faith - - that she had repented and acknowledged that to God and that He had forgiven her. I then anointed her for the last time as she was then and there finally HEALED - - and not just given temporary “relief!” It was near the time for the Feast of Tabernacles (held in Squaw Valley, California - - a very high elevation). She had not attended the last couple of years for “fear” of a heart attack. But she attended that year (and thereafter) with NO COMPLICATIONS. She was *willing* to learn the lesson God wanted her to learn by her ordeal. The key in this case was that she was (eventually became) *willing* to admit there was something she needed help from God in understanding why He was delaying the answer. If a person is unwilling to question himself or herself and unwilling to “look into that mirror of God’s Word” then how can that person expect God to intervene? Any time we get defensive we automatically cut ourselves off from God and His discernment and intervention.

I have shared this account with others throughout the years. Some have been able to take it to heart and seek God’s help in understanding why He is not responding to their requests and have found that He will hear and answer if they truly seek Him with a humble and contrite (submissive) heart. Others have taken offense at me personally for (what they consider) my *suggesting* that they are somehow falling short and that God might be using these circumstances to try and teach them something by these trials (see James 1:2-4). Some have even accused me of “finding fault with them” when all I was doing is *suggesting* they **ASK GOD** if there is something He wants them to learn from this trial. If we resent any suggestion that we search our own hearts and seek God’s input then how can we claim we are actually following the instructions found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17? Psalm 51 is a tremendous scripture to use when we find ourselves *convinced that we are right with God* when we may need more insight from Him.

Another scripture that is most helpful in this regard is the book of Job. Job KNEW that he was a “good man” and that he had been obedient to God. At first he resented any “hint” that there was anything he needed to learn or to remember that God is the master potter molding us into His image. [Later in this article we will deal with the divine purpose of human life and the trials we face.] He even convinced himself that God was WRONG in allowing these trials and that eventually *God would be forced to admit He was wrong in allowing Job to be afflicted and would have to apologize for it* (see Job 16:7-17; 19:6-11; 27:4-6 13:3, and verses 15-23). Look at Job’s arrogance in criticizing and judging God - - a rather serious sin! As verse 23 says, Job thought he had no sin and that he had nothing to learn from these trials. Now study chapter 27:2-6. He was going to hang on to his own self righteousness and he was not going to allow his conscience to reproach him “AS LONG AS I LIVE!”

I recently heard a sermon where the preacher proclaimed that God CALLED JOB RIGHTEOUS. God did not proclaim Job “righteous.” God merely stated that Job was “blameless” from a human point of view, that he was “upright, feared God and avoided evil” (Job 1:1). Apparently this preacher disavows Isaiah 66:6 where God states clearly that “all our righteousness is a filthy rags to God.” What Job had was LEGALISTIC RIGHTEOUSNESS (Phil. 3:6). He was like the young nobleman who came to Christ proclaiming his own “goodness” through his own “obedience” and yet he was disqualified for eternal life (Matthew 19:16-26). The Bible is crystal clear in identifying TWO TYPES OF SINS – *internal* sin against one’s very soul and character and *external* sin involving other humans. Christ continually showed that internal sins are *weightier* than physical sins (Matthew 23:23-28). Job’s sins were *internal* and involved self righteousness, vanity, human pride and self pity (Job 6:3, 7:11, 19:6 and 23:4). God wanted Job in His family and yet God will *never* allow such character flaws in His family. Job even dared to argue with and dispute with God (Job 13:3 and verses 18-19). Job had status in the community and obviously was proud, self righteous and vain about this human status (Job 29:4-25). If Job was so righteous, as this preacher claimed, then why did he so bitterly repent and for what did he repent? (see Job 42:5-6). In Chapter 40:3-5 Job realized that he should shut his mouth and stop speaking about things he did not understand. I have known people like Job who think they do not need to search their hearts (as Job was *forced* to do) to see if there is something God wants them to learn. And they resent any hint that they should do this. It has taken a lot of pain on my part to be able to do this personally - - I have been there and done that until God taught me that I must submit to Him and His word and not rely on my own understanding. I try to help people see this so they do not have to suffer as I did learning these lessons. God used Elihu to try and soften Job up to his own vanity and self righteousness but it finally took God Himself to humble Job and make him listen and learn so that God could restore his fortunes.

What is disturbing about the minister who was professing Job’s “righteousness” is that he came out of the Worldwide Church of God and that church stressed an “obedience based” Christianity. It is true that a true Christian obeys God through His commandments. However, one is NOT saved by technical “obedience.” Salvation is a free gift that we cannot earn. And it is only given to those who have totally surrendered their wills to God through His Holy Spirit. You cannot “earn” God’s blessings but you must realize God is not going to bless you IN YOUR DISOBEDIENCE - - IN YOUR SINS! Many have come to believe (as the Pharisees did) that if you keep the Sabbath and Holy Days and other points of the law then you will automatically be saved. That is an “obedience based” religion that God does not approve.

Let us go back to Hezekiah for a moment. Where in Hezekiah do you see even a hint of the type problem you readily see in Job? Hezekiah *opened himself up* to whatever God wanted of him. Job eventually reached this attitude and was able to repent bitterly (Job 42:5-6). I have a favorite saying for those who resent and resist looking within themselves. I tell them: “God is immortal and eternal and will last forever - - you are physical and temporary - - GOD CAN AND WILL OUTLAST YOU!” It is obvious that Hezekiah understood this and totally surrendered to God and God honored that submissive and teachable attitude with an immediate answer (Isaiah 66:2). Remember that Isaiah was only God’s messenger and Hezekiah’s healing was NOT dependant on Isaiah’s faith or personal conduct (GOD DID NOT GRANT HEZEKIAH ANOTHER 15

YEARS OF LIFE BECAUSE OF ISAIAH'S FAITH) - - rather, this was a matter between Hezekiah and God and Hezekiah knew he must go directly to God for the answer.

Let us go back to Job's case again for another point. In chapter 32:1 we find that **JOB WAS RIGHTEOUS IN HIS OWN EYES**. Then Elihu (who was a true friend to Job) began to *repeat to Job what had come out of Job's own mouth*. Nowhere in the book of Job or the entire Bible do you find God disagreeing with Elihu or correcting him for what he said to Job. It seems obvious that God was inspiring Elihu to speak these words. But Job was NOT willing to listen to any *human* since he thought he had the true take on his situation - - **THAT GOD WAS UNFAIR AND THAT WAS THE FINAL WORD** [I am reminded of a popular saying that illustrates this point: "My mind is made up so don't confuse me with the facts!"]. Job thought his understanding was superior to any one else. He discounted all that any other "man" had to say to him. But God uses humans to help other humans. Finally God opened Job's eyes to see himself **AS GOD SEES HIM** and Job did NOT like what he saw (James 1:22-25). Finally Job was able to **HUMBLY REPENT** in the way we find in Psalm 51.

WHY TRIALS

Why then do we face trials? To gain a scriptural answer to this question you should obtain a copy of my article titled "Why Troubles and Trials?" We were created **IN THE IMAGE OF GOD** (Genesis 1:26-27) but in a temporary human form we call flesh or "mortal." The word "mortal" means subject to death. Only Jesus Christ has "immortality" at this time (1 Timothy 6:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:53). God made us so that we can experience and suffer pain so that He can use this fact to **GAIN OUR ATTENTION**. When this flesh hurts and suffers long enough we will then find ourselves *willing* to give up our human reasoning and go to God and humbly say: "Here I am, Lord, what do you want of me?" Compare this with 1 Samuel 3:1-10. Samuel responded to God "Speak to me for your servant is **LISTENING**." But notice that God used this young man (Samuel) to tell Eli his sins.

Once we have truly suffered in the flesh we are then willing to use the scriptures for our teachings, our rebukes from God, our correction and our training (2 Timothy 3:16 again). God shows that we must be brought to the place and attitude where we can have and maintain a humble and contrite (teachable) heart that trembles at God's word (Isaiah 66:2). This is **THE ONLY KIND OF PERSON TO WHOM GOD WILL LISTEN AND ANSWER!**

WHO ARE YOU?

It is truly amazing that humans can live out their entire life and never seem to sincerely try to learn **WHY AND WHAT THEY REALLY ARE** - - never try to **LEARN THE PURPOSE OF LIFE!** In Genesis 1:26-27 we find that God created humans **IN HIS OWN IMAGE AND LIKENESS**. He made them out of the soil from which this earth is made. But He made them **WITH A POTENTIAL OF BECOMING SPIRIT BEINGS** - - being **TRANSFORMED** from "**HUMAN TO DIVINE**" (see 1 Corinthians 15:35-58). This mortal flesh must be clothed with immortality **AT THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST TO THIS EARTH** (see verses 49-54). Also study 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 to further understand this. Romans 8:14-17 goes further in explaining this process and the fact that once a person truly repents of his or her sins and is

converted and baptized and receives the Holy Spirit, he or she BECOME LITERAL SONS OF GOD. Once you receive this calling (John 6:44) you recognize that you BELONG TO GOD and that any problem you have is GOD'S PROBLEM.

At this point let us return to the day we entered an ETERNAL CONTRACT with God - - the day we were baptized. I personally entered this contract with God at the Feast of Tabernacles in 1953. Looking back over more than half a century I realize NOW that I did not understand very much about God - - I had so much to learn about Him and the plan He has for me and all humans. It has taken more than 57 years (and much pain and sorrow) to reach the understanding I now have. The only positive thing I can say of that day in Big Sandy, Texas when I was baptized in a somewhat muddy lake was that I truly meant the VOW I took before God. I pledged to give my life over to Him for His honor and glory and that I would allow Him to refine me and *transform* me into His very image. But I did not know what all that meant at the time.

During these more than 57 years I have been brought to the point of total despair not knowing how or if I could or would survive another day. But God saw me through these trials even though at times I humanly would have preferred to literally die and get it all over with. But God did not take that position. He has a specific position for me in His family that requires special training - - training that involves human suffering and anguish so that I would come to the point that I understand between this temporary human existence and ETERNITY in the very family of God. I had to come to the place to understand that there is NOTHING in this physical existence that can be compared with the glory that awaits me in that family of God (Romans 8:37-39).

I am writing this article during the week that Michael Jackson died and had his memorial service. Michael was what most people considered "successful." But how do we identify "success?" He acquired and spent literally hundreds of millions of dollars in his pursuit of happiness and fulfillment - - BUT TO NO AVAIL! He proved beyond the shadow of any doubt that NO AMOUNT OF MONEY CAN "BUY" HAPPINESS OR CONTENTMENT. He spent literally millions of dollars on drugs and other physical means that left him both dependant and vanquished and in despair. What did all this money get for him but misery?

As this scenario with Michael Jackson unfolded, I wrote to my brothers and sisters in Kenya. By worldly standards those people are poor. Yet, as I pointed out to them, they have and can enjoy GREATER WEALTH than Michael Jackson could ever find or envision. They have learned about the true God of the Bible - - the Living God. They have learned why they were born and what their ETERNAL future will be as members of the very family of God: as His SONS, HEIRS AND JOINT HEIRS WITH CHRIST (Romans 8:14-17). I also pointed out that Michael Jackson is now dead and in his grave and will NOT be resurrected UNTIL AFTER THE MILLENNIUM (see Revelation 20:4-6). That those in Kenya who have responded to God's calling will be those who are blessed with being in THE FIRST RESURRECTION and will rule with Christ on this earth for that one thousand years (Revelation 5:8-18). That when the one thousand years are over, Michael Jackson will be resurrected and will COME TO THEM TO BE TAUGHT ABOUT THE ONE TRUE GOD OF THE BIBLE. One brother in Kenya (Genesis) immediately responded with "I am looking forward to the end of the one thousand years when Michael Jackson will come up in a resurrection and come to us to learn about the God we serve."

Even though we face great trials and tests in this human life, the promise God has made to us is so much greater than anything we can experience in this flesh. Physical riches cannot and will not bring happiness and contentment. But, knowing who we are and why we were born and what awaits us FOR ALL ETERNITY is worth any price we may need to pay in this flesh (see Romans 8:18-39). We all eventually must face death. The question we should ask ourselves is HOW WILL WE FACE DEATH AND HOW WILL WE ANSWER TO GOD WHEN WE COME BEFORE HIM FOR JUDGMENT? Will we die trusting Him or will we die trying to hang on to this temporary human life? If we were called by God and He granted us repentance and forgiveness then we entered that ETERNAL CONTRACT with God as a potential SON OF GOD! We join the ranks of those mentioned in Hebrews 11 - - some of whom had to literally give up their human lives to gain eternal life in God's family. They were giving up their physical lives so as to receive THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND A BETTER RESURRECTION (James 1:12, Hebrews 11:13 and 39-40). The question each of us should ask ourselves is: "JUST HOW STRONG IS OUR COMMITMENT IN KEEPING OUR PART OF THIS ETERNAL CONTRACT WITH GOD?"

At times a simple example gives us more meaning to a point. A good friend and spiritual brother (by the name of Jack) related to me the following dialogue between a young girl and her mother. This young girl was watching her mother bake a cake. The mother asked "would you like a bite of cake?" The girl said "yes!" and the mother offered her some "cooking oil." The girl said "yuck!" The mother then offered a couple of raw eggs and the girl said "those are gross!" The mother then offered some baking soda and the girl again replied "Yuck!" Finally the mother offered some flour and again the girl refused with "gross!" The mother then explained that when we combine these ingredients and cook them with fire they turn in to a delicious cake.

In this case, God is the master baker. He mixes the ingredients of our lives and then adds the heat of trials and tribulations so that we are "baked" into the consistency God wants in His sons. As the baker watches over the literal cake to make certain it is not burned and ruined, so our master baker (God) watches over us and supervises the process of refining us into the specific sons He wants.

NO WIGGLE ROOM

Some have become angry toward me personally for vividly pointing out what God says in the Bible. I am not responsible for what the Bible says. My job is to show people where to find specific subjects in the Bible. Once I do this my specific job is finished unless and until that person seeks further information about the true God of the Bible. Each person has the responsibility before God to study these passages and then determine how they apply to the self. It is true that I do not give very much *wiggle room* since God does not give ANY WIGGLE ROOM. God has made it crystal clear in the Bible that the road to salvation is hard, difficult and narrow and that only a few will make it into the first resurrection (compare John 6:44, Mathew 7:14, Revelation 20:4-6 and 1 Corinthians 15:42-58). Many religious people of Christ's day became offended when Christ spoke words they did not want to hear about their preconceived opinions of themselves (John 6:60-69). I personally have worked with people for the past 57 years and some have become offended at me for pointing out character traits they needed to reconsider. Rather than looking deeply at themselves and their attitude they chose to fault me - -

the same as people faulted Christ. Christ said that, just as people rejected Him, they would also reject His true servants. I have had people (whom I love deeply) turn their back on me and walk away even though I assured them their actions and words could never diminish my love and respect for them. I always give people an absolute pledge that I will never leave them regardless of their attitude toward me but be ready to walk with them as soon as they are willing and able to continue the walk. 2 Timothy 2:24-26 contain God's clear instructions to me in dealing with those who become offended at the suggestions given. I dare NEVER deviate from these instructions from God.

Referring to what Christ said, as recorded in Matthew 7:12-14 and 19:26-27, Peter stated clearly: "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner? So then, those WHO SUFFER ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD (God's discipline to gain our attention - - Hebrews 12:1-13) should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good works" (1 Peter 4:18-19). If and when we honestly believe we are suffering UNJUSTLY we are to commit such into the hands of God and patiently wait for Him to show His will. Nowhere does God grant to us the right or the authority to go about INSISTING that the other person CHANGE FIRST **BEFORE** we personally get right with God. We must never try and do God's job for Him or the job of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that convicts and converts others. Getting our feelings hurt and pouting and turning our back on others with whom we think we have personal grievances will NEVER accomplish anything good or worthwhile. Such only makes matters worse!

Christ made it clear that in the judgment MANY will claim "MANY WONDERFUL WORKS" and yet Christ will denounce them (Matthew 7:21-23). Our personal opinion of how "righteous" we THINK we are is NOT what counts with God. What counts with God is a broken and CONTRITE heart (not a self-righteous one) that actually trembles at God's word. Too many people want to try and remove a tiny splinter from a brother's eye when they have what God considers a BEAM in their own eye and character. Christ made profound statements in Luke 6:37-42 that will be used to judge us. Ironically, the person with the beam in his own eye has a microscopic view of the tiny splinter in the other person's eye. Yet, he is determined not to even consider the beam in his own eye until he has absolute proof the other person has removed the splinter in his eye. God hates this kind of hypocrisy.

Many claim they understand that God works through the circumstances of our lives to teach us His will. However, when a trial comes many lash out at others rather than doing what Hezekiah did as recorded in Isaiah 38. Hezekiah KNEW that this trial was BETWEEN HIM AND GOD ALONE - - NO ONE ELSE. He did not blame Isaiah for delivering the message. He kept the matter between him and God and totally humbled himself before God. Because of his total surrender God heard him IMMEDIATELY. If and when God does not hear us immediately then we have the obligation to follow Hezekiah's example. Hezekiah realized "SURELY IT WAS **FOR MY BENEFIT** THAT I SUFFERED SUCH ANGUISH!" Yet today we find people who want to place the blame on others rather than doing as Hezekiah did.

I have worked with people from different countries with this kind of problem. Those, who ARE WILLING TO LET GOD TEACH THEM WHAT HE HAS IN MIND BY THE PROBLEM, are given the answer and receive the help they need. Others just keep on suffering. I caution

such people that “God can and will OUTLAST YOU since He is eternal and you are mortal.” I dealt with one man from Ontario, Canada who just had to place the blame on others rather than looking at himself. He still has his problems that torment him and they may eventually kill him. Someday in the judgment he will hear Christ say “I provided you with the answers to your problems but you refused to listen!” God does not ignore those who truly seek Him with an open and receptive heart. But God does NOT force advice on any and neither do His true ministers. Each person must make his or her own decisions.

In bringing this to a close let me state that for 57 years I have known men who claimed to be God’s ministers. Yet they verbally and emotionally abused their wives and children who lived in fear of their next explosion. No man can claim to represent God and administer such abuse to his family. No true minister of God can help such a person - - only God can but it will not be pleasant when God does deal with him. When I encounter such a person I merely tell him “I cannot help you - - all God allows me to do is pray for you and TURN YOU OVER TO HIM!” Then I must wait for God through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to help him as I can’t since it is not my job to convict or convert any!

In summary then, a person totally committed to God and to the calling He has been given is a SON OF GOD, AN HEIR OF GOD AND A JOINT HEIR WITH CHRIST - - provided we are willing to count it joy when we suffer trials with Christ. This shows how important we are to God in the purpose He is working out on this earth. We are THE OFFSPRING OF GOD (His first fruits) - - the ones the rest of the earth is waiting on to be revealed as these sons of God (Romans 8:16-25). If we fully realize and grasp this then we will NOT allow the trials we encounter defeat us and make us defensive as we will CONSIDER IT JOY that the great God is working with us to perfect our character so we can become a part of His family. If we really know and grasp this then we will allow NOTHING to disrupt our life for God and Christ (Romans 8:28-39). I challenge each of you to carefully study these verses word by word and ask God to help you grasp their meaning and to enable you to make them a part of your very being. Therein lies your salvation - - or lack of same! May the great God help you do this is my earnest prayer.

When you face a trial THEN REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE GOD’S FIRST FRUITS - - A SON OF GOD, AN HEIR OF GOD AND A JOINT HEIR WITH JESUS CHRIST TO BE GLORIFIED WITH CHRIST PROVIDED YOU TRUST GOD TO HELP YOU THROUGH THESE TRIALS. You have nothing but a temporary physical life to lose but ETERNITY TO GAIN! My prayer is that you CHOOSE TO SERVE GOD ALONG WITH THE TRIALS. This physical life is very temporary but salvation is for ETERNITY. Don’t ever forget that fact.

If any of you have not read my other articles you may want to request them. They are: Why Trials and Tests?: Encouragement: Does God Heal Today?: The Ten Virgins: A New Beginning: What is the True Gospel? and Does God Hate Esau?