

What to do when QUESTIONS stand in the way of your FAITH

Opening Text: Psalm 44

What a disturbing contrast between verses 1-8 (praise) and 9-26 (questions, resentment and offense at God). God didn't just allow perfect prayers to be recorded in the Bible - He also allowed prayers like this: imperfect prayers filled with disappointment, frustration and questions. We need to learn how to deal with those times when it seems that God is not there, and we have more questions than answers.

“Why do you sleep, O Lord? Arise! Do not cast us off forever. Why do you hide your face, and forget all our affliction and oppression?” V.23

1. WHY? – The most frequently asked question of all time

In a recent interview about his upcoming documentary entitled “The story of God”, actor Morgan Freeman said, “I’m primarily interested in why, what is the why of it” Aristotle, the Greek philosopher said, ‘men will always want to know’.

There are questions we ask out of curiosity and then there are questions that carry disappointment and offense.

There are questions like the one the disciples asked about a man born blind, which carried simple curiosity: “who sinned, this man, or his parents that he was born blind?” (John 9:2) and then there are questions like this one in Psalm 44, which carry a feeling of resentful displeasure towards God.

- A bit like the one they asked Jesus in the storm:
“Teacher don’t you care that we are perishing?” Mark 4:38
- Or like the question of John the Baptist in the prison:
“Are you the Coming One, or do we look for another?” Matthew 11:3
- Also, **Judges 6:13** - *“Gideon said to Him, “O my lord, if the Lord is with us, **why** then has all this happened to us? And **where** are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.”*
- **Psalms 6:3** - *My soul also is greatly troubled; But You, O Lord—how long?*

When confronted with the million-dollar questions of life, it is easy to point to God and just assume that He must be behind everything that happens. God often is “the usual suspect”.

2. The usual suspect

The writer of this psalm just assumed that God was behind all their trouble. YOU, YOU, YOU – 11 times in this psalm. God becomes the ‘usual suspect’ when bad things happen. For instance, disasters like the 2011 Tsunami in Japan are called by insurance companies “acts of God’ (read quotes at the end of the page).

A movie from 1995 titled “***The usual suspects***” had this famous line: “*The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn’t exist*”.

We will talk more about that next week but let us now go back to our text and look at **Psl.44: 22**: *Yet for Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

3. Paul addressed this very statement in Romans 8:36-39

David in the O.T., with O.T. revelation, asks a question that Paul, in the NT, with NT revelation answers.

- a) “As it is written” ... “**yet**” – this is how we, as NT believers, should look at trouble: “*Yet, in all these things we are more than conquerors!*”

“*It is written... yet...*” - Paul in the NT has fresh and more advanced insight into trouble and suffering. People of the NT know Jesus, they know what “God in the flesh looks like”. People in the NT have seen Jesus in action - they have seen how He *went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil for God was with Him* (Acts 10:38).

4. The 7 questions of Paul

Let us now look at the whole passage in context: **Romans 8:31-39**

Verses 31-35 describe 7 questions that reveal 7 unquestionable realities. These are not questions of doubt or offense but rhetorical questions that reveal with absolute certainty the presence of God with us in the midst of any situation and the unfailing goodness of God.

5. The eternal perspective

Another aspect that escaped David in Psalms 44 is the eternal perspective:

Romans 8:18 - “*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*”

The sufferings have only to do with this present age – there are glories to enjoy in eternity. While we may not understand certain things, we also know that there is an eternity without suffering prepared for the believer in the presence of God.

Conclusion:

Next week, we will be going deeper in this subject. However, let us summarise our teaching today around a scripture that should be our primary reference when considering evil and suffering:

Romans 8:36-38

36 *As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”*

37 *Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*

38 *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, **39** nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Quotations:

Rabbi Harold Kushner, author of the book “When Bad Things Happen to Good People” wrote at the time of the great 2011 Japanese Tsunami,

“Whenever a disaster like this occurs, I go back to the Bible to the first book of Kings. Elijah in despair over the situation of Israel, runs to the desert, back to Mt Sinai to find the God of the Revelation of Moses.

“And lo, the Lord passed by. There was a mighty wind, splitting mountains and shattering rocks, but the Lord was not in the wind. There was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake”.

To me, that is the key: the Lord was not in the earthquake. Natural disasters are not acts of God. God cares about the well-being of people; nature is blind, an equal-opportunity destroyer”.

CNN March 21, 2011

The **Rev. Franklin Graham**, president of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association said,

“I don’t believe God wants this to happen. I don’t think it was ever God’s intention. We know that there are going to be storms in life. No matter what happens we need to keep our faith and trust in Almighty God. And I want people of Japan to know that God hasn’t forgotten them, that God does care for them and that He loves them”.

Dr. Gregory A Boyd, author of the book ‘Is God to Blame?’ wrote,

“When things went wrong in people’s lives, whether it was about their physical or spiritual condition or some tragedy that happened to them, I don’t recall Jesus ever looking for the hand of God in it. Instead, He had compassion on suffering people and treated them like casualties of war. He expressed God’s heart by bringing relief to people’s suffering”.

Recommended Books on this subject:

- **The big Why – Walter Hallam** (available at our bookstore)
- **Is God to Blame – Gregory A Boyd** (available at our bookstore)
- **Must Christians Suffer – Kenneth E Hagin** (available from Amazon)
- **Why Bad Things Happen to God’s People – Derek Prince** (available from Amazon)