

HUMAN SUFFERING



WHY... AND HOW MUCH LONGER?

ABOUT THE COVER

The cover image for this booklet calls to mind the future hope that God has given to us—a time when He causes all suffering to end: “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

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Introduction

Why is there so much suffering in the world?

Why do we all, from time to time, experience suffering, pain, and even death? Why don't we have peace with other people or even other nations? Why does this life seem to have no purpose? We are born, then live to be 70, 80 or 90 years old, and then we die! Or, in far too many cases, lives are snuffed out prematurely and surviving loved ones grieve in despair and frustration. Husbands and wives who lose their mates don't want to go on living. Children grieve when their parents die. Parents grieve for their children who died before them, maybe in war, in an accident, or through an incurable disease.

Again, we ask, WHY is there *SO MUCH* pain and suffering?

Chapter 1 — The Cause of All Suffering

First, we need to understand that there is ALWAYS a cause for every effect. There are reasons for suffering. In order to be able to cope with our trials, we must first know the reasons for them!

In our search for understanding the reasons, we must first go back to the very beginning of creation, long *before the first human beings were created* to live on this earth.

Most people down through history have not understood that it was GOD who created *EVERYTHING* (compare Ephesians 3:9). Very few comprehend the fact that God created the SPIRIT world, which includes angelic beings, *before* He created matter. And fewer still, realize that many of the angels DECIDED to rebel against God. Those disobedient angels are known today as the evil spirits of darkness, or demons, and demons have much to do with the present suffering of mankind.

In our free booklet, “*Angels, Demons and the Spirit World*,” we discuss, at length, the role of Satan the devil and his demons in this present evil world. Pages 38–42 of the booklet are excerpted herein to help you understand the profound influence they have had, and *continue* to have on human beings.

Lucifer and Satan

The Bible reveals that God created all of the angels. They were not created as robots, but as spirit beings with the power to choose and to decide. One high-ranking angel, a cherub by the name of Lucifer, rebelled and sinned against God (Isaiah 14:12–15; Ezekiel 28:11–17). Lucifer wanted to “ascend to heaven” to dethrone God (Isaiah 14:13). He wanted to “ascend above the heights of the clouds” (Isaiah 14:14). This shows us that he was here on earth, because he wanted to ascend above the clouds of the earth to go to heaven. When he sinned, he was thrown back to this earth (Isaiah 14:12). He became Satan, which means enemy or adversary. Lucifer, or Satan, was already here on earth when Adam and Eve were created. We are told that the serpent was already here in order to deceive Eve when

Summary

We have seen in this booklet that this is presently not God’s world. Man decided to reject God and to follow Satan instead, causing all the suffering and pain that we are all so familiar with today. God has called us out of Satan’s evil world to be different, but He has not called us out of trials. God permits, to an extent, His disciples to suffer and be tempted and persecuted by Satan and his human instruments, for many reasons.

It is the purpose of this booklet to present to you some of those reasons, so that you can be encouraged, instead of discouraged, when trials come upon you. Remember that God allows our suffering so that we don’t forget that this is Satan’s world; so that we can become better persons; so that we can show God that we are willing to suffer for Him and our future; and so that we can show the world that God has considered us worthy to endure affliction for His name. By following Christ’s commission to His Church, we are preparing to become kings and priests and judges, willingly suffering for righteousness’ sake, as we know that our reward will be great.

If we fulfill our individual and collective responsibilities today, to be about our Father’s business, we WILL enter God’s glorious Kingdom! We will then be prepared to help Christ in the restoration of all things, thus making it a MUCH BETTER WORLD! In this future age, there will be no more suffering for us! Then, we will be given our part in God’s Kingdom, about which the Bible states in Isaiah 9:7: “Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end...”

“made”—in the context of making someone a governor.

In Titus 1:5, it is translated as, “appoint,” when talking about the ordination of elders. But it would also be correct to say that Paul instructed Titus to *make* elders out of certain people.

So we see, then, that this Greek word “*kathistemi*” is used many times in connection with what you and I will become in the World Tomorrow—spiritual rulers, governors, judges, and ministers or priests.

In the Millenium, Christ will restore God’s rule over this world, and we will assist Him. He will make us rulers, kings and priests, under Him. We are *being trained* today to qualify for kingship and priesthood in the future, by becoming perfect. **It is necessary that we go through suffering in the process of becoming perfect.**

Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden. The serpent is identified as Satan the devil (Revelation 12:9). Since Satan appeared to the first man and his wife as the deceiver, he must have lived on this earth prior to man as Lucifer—when he was not yet the deceiver—before he tried to “ascend to heaven.”

Actually, before he was sent to earth, Lucifer had been trained in heaven before the very throne of God, and he had angels under his command. We read in Ezekiel 28:14 that he was the anointed cherub who covers. Recall that the cherubs covered the throne of God when God appeared to Moses in the Tabernacle. Also, we read in Ezekiel 28:14 that Lucifer was on the holy mountain of God in heaven (compare Hebrews 12:22). When he sinned by trying to ascend from this earth to heaven to dethrone God, he was cast out of the mountain of God (Ezekiel 28:16). Christ later said that He saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning (Luke 10:18).

In the Hebrew, the word translated as “Lucifer” in the *Authorized Version* and in many other translations, is “*helel*,” or “*heylel*,” which means “lightbringer,” “shining one,” “morning star,” or “shining star of the dawn.” The word “Lucifer” is the Latin translation of the Hebrew word “*helel*,” or “*heylel*,” conveying exactly the same meaning. It is therefore appropriate to use this word in describing the cherub who later became Satan (“*sawtwan*” in Hebrew).

Satan, the prince of darkness, is still ruling on this earth. Revelation 2:13 tells us expressly that Satan has a “throne” here on earth. He holds the people of this world captive to do his will (2 Timothy 2:26). He has authority over all the kingdoms of this world (Luke 4:5–7). He is called the “ruler of this world” in John 14:30. He is even called the “god of this age” in 2 Corinthians 4:4. Satan is called “the prince of the power of the air” in Ephesians 2:2.

Angels Became Demons

Lucifer was not the only spirit being who rebelled against God. The angels under his control accompanied him and became known as demons thereafter. A reference to that rebellion is

made in Revelation 12:4, stating that one-third of the angels (referred to as “stars”) followed Satan and became demons. This indicates that the other two-thirds of the angels stayed loyal to God.

Another attempt by Satan and his demons to fight against God is described in Revelation 12:7–9. This attempt will take place just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. This event is not the same as the event described in Revelation 12:4, but it shows the pattern. In both cases, Satan and his demons are thrown back to earth.

We read in Jude 6 about angels who did not keep their own domain (the earth), but left their own abode in order to go to heaven to dethrone God. They are now reserved in everlasting chains under darkness; that is, they are angels of darkness. They are still ruling this earth under Satan (compare Ephesians 6:12 where demons are called “the RULERS of the darkness of this age”). They are “chained,” or held captive, by their own spiritual perversion. We read in 2 Peter 2:4 that “...God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell [in Greek, *tartarus*, describing a condition, rather than a place] and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment.”

Satan and his demons are VERY REAL. They are not just symbols or metaphors of some unidentifiable “force” of evil. Satan tempted Christ. Satan offered Him all the kingdoms of the world if Christ would only fall down and worship him. Christ cast out many demons when He was here on earth. At one time, He asked a demon, “What is your name?” The demon answered, “Legion,” because Christ was dealing at that moment with many demons (Luke 8:30). As God’s holy angels have individual names, so do demons.

The Power of Satan and His Demons

We must not underestimate the power and influence of Satan and his demons. The Bible tells us that Satan “deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9). His biggest deception, no doubt, is to convince unsuspecting man that he does not even

His Church—His spiritual body—the commission to RESTORE all things. The Church was to begin the restoration process by preaching the gospel in all the world; by acting as watchmen to the nations; by feeding the flock through correct teaching; and by emphasizing the need to get ready for His return. As long as the Church exists, that commission will NEVER end. After Christ’s return, the restoration process will really get started! The Church of God will continue to carry out its commission, by assisting Christ to rule the world—to send out His Word to those nations who will survive the “Great Tribulation” and who had not heard the truth before (compare Isaiah 66:19); to teach those who will be born and live during the Millennium; and to teach those who will come out of their graves, in the second resurrection, after the Millennium (Revelation 20:5).

The word for “restore,” as used when talking about the coming of Elijah, is the same word in the Greek as the word used to describe the healing or restoration of the hand or the eyesight. It is also the same word that was used when the disciples asked Christ when He would restore the kingdom to Israel. The word is, “*apokathistemi*.”

Commentaries, encyclopedias and concordances define this word as, “to reconstitute,” “to restore again,” or, “to place down again.” The syllable “*apo*” in the word “*apo-kathistemi*,” when used in composition as a prefix, usually denotes separation, departure, cessation, completion or reversal.

The word “*kathistemi*” is defined as, “to place down permanently, to designate, or to constitute.”

The Greek word “*apo-kathistemi*” conveys the concept, then, that something is again placed down or instituted, which is different from what is in existence at this time; it departs from the present and brings into existence—again—what was formerly in existence.

Let’s note how the word “*kathistemi*” is used in the Bible.

In the overwhelming majority of the cases, it is used in the context of rulership. For instance, in Matthew 24:45, 47; and in Matthew 25:21, 23, it is translated as, “**made ruler**.” It is also translated in this way in the parallel account, in Luke 12:42, 44. Finally, it is translated that way in Acts 7:27, 35.

In Luke 12:14, it is translated “made”—in the context of making or not making someone a judge. In Acts 7:10, it is also translated as

One example is found in 2 Kings 8:1–5, where God used Elisha to RESTORE a dead person to life. When Christ returns, He will do the same, though on a much greater scale. He will RESTORE all of us who have died in Christ, to life, but this time to real life—eternal life—through the first resurrection from the dead. Later, at the appointed time, He will restore all mankind to physical life—in the second resurrection.

Another example is in Ruth 4:15, where we read that Boaz is called a “RESTORER of life” to Naomi, the mother-in-law of Ruth, since he was willing to help Naomi and Ruth and to take care of them. He married Ruth and produced offspring, bringing forth, as a future descendant, King David. Christ, at His return, will RESTORE to mankind all the happiness and prosperity and abundance that you and I only dream of today—the kind of happiness, prosperity and abundance that mankind, as a whole, has never experienced, nor even comprehended.

When here on earth as a human being, Christ healed people from sicknesses or injuries. We read that when He did that, a hand was RESTORED (Matthew 12:13; Luke 6:10). Or, the eyesight of a blind person was RESTORED (Mark 8:25).

We also read that Paul admonished the church in Galatia to RESTORE one who was overtaken in a trespass (Galatians 6:1). So here we see spiritual healing, in addition to physical healing, and the Bible refers to both as RESTORATION.

Again, these acts of restoration were forerunners, or types, of the all-encompassing, worldwide restoration still to come in the future. When Christ returns and restores God’s rule over this earth, He will bring healing—both physical and spiritual healing.

THE CHURCH’S COMMISSION

We read in both Matthew 17:11 and in Mark 9:12 where Jesus Christ said that Elijah is coming to RESTORE all things. We also find in the book of Malachi, that God will send Elijah prior to the “day of the Lord,” to turn, or you could say, RESTORE the hearts of the fathers to the children, and *vice versa* (Malachi 4:5–6).

The “Elijah,” spoken of in those passages, is a reference to the Church of God—not just one particular individual! Christ gave to

exist. He deceives others by pretending that he is an “angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). Many preach as “his ministers,” transforming themselves “into ministers of righteousness” (verse 15). John later said that “many deceivers have gone out into the world” (2 John 7), and he warned us in 1 John 4:1 to “...test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” Christ prophesied for the end time that “...false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect” (Matthew 24:24).

Satan and his demons can show great signs and wonders. It is prophesied that Satan will ultimately give his power to a religious leader who will work “signs...by which he deceived” the people (Revelation 19:20). False religious teachers, inspired by demons, might even be able to accurately foretell the future (Deuteronomy 13:1–4; Acts 16:16–19).

Satan has the power to inspire people to go to war (Job 1:9–15; Revelation 16:13–14; Revelation 20:7–10). He has the power to throw down fire to consume man and beast (In Job 1:16, people felt that God brought this fire, but the context shows that Satan was the power behind it). As the “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2), he can bring destruction through mighty winds.

Though many people don’t believe in the existence of Satan and demons, they are quick to dabble in the occult, being ignorant of the danger therein. Demons are called “familiar spirits” because they want to *familiarize* themselves with man (Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27). Haunted houses, poltergeists, séances, communication with the dead, and contacts with “aliens” are all clearly of demonic origin. Satan and demons are destructive. They love to torment people (Luke 6:18). Once we have made “contact” with demons, we can’t get rid of them anymore, barring a miracle from God (Luke 11:24–26).

There are many Scriptures that prove that Satan or demons can possess animals and people, forcing them to do terrible things (Luke 22:3; John 13:27). Demon-possessed people can be extremely violent (Matthew 8:28) and self-destructive

(Mark 5:2–5). They lose all sense of decency (Luke 8:27).

The Bible also shows that demons can possess or influence people to make them spiritually, psychologically, and physically sick. Even Paul was sick because “a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me” (2 Corinthians 12:7). Through the influence of demons, people can be mute, deaf and dumb (Mark 9:17, 25), epileptic (Matthew 17:15–18), and infirm (Luke 13:11, 16). When a demon leaves such a person, it may appear as if the person has been healed from a physical sickness.

Satan and demons have the power to transport a human being from one place to another (Matthew 4:5, 8; Luke 4:5, 9). This explains strange encounters with UFOs, where “abducted” people are sometimes found hundreds of miles away from their residence, without knowing how they got there.

Sorcery, witchcraft, hypnosis, and certain meditation practices are further methods of Satan to overpower the mind of a human being and to make him or her into a helpless victim. Whenever we give ourselves “over” to another influence, we have become victims of the powers of darkness.

So then, with this fundamental understanding of the spirit world, and the fact that Satan and his demons presently **RULE** this earth, we can clearly see the origin of so much suffering. Man has been following Satan’s influences without realizing it. Satan has deceived the *WHOLE WORLD*, and he has become the god of this world, because man has chosen, unknowingly and ignorantly, to follow the devil’s way of life, thereby rejecting God’s righteous way of life.

But, how did it happen that man *CHOSE* to follow Satan, thereby rejecting God? The answer can be found in the first few chapters of the first book of the Bible—the book of Genesis.

rulership of God’s Government will spread over all the land, reaching the uttermost corners of the earth. God promised that faithful judges would be given to the city of blood and war—the city of Jerusalem, which was once called the Holy City, and which will again be called the Holy City, in the truest sense of the word (Isaiah 1:21, 26–28).

There was a time when Melchisedek, as the King of Salem, ruled over the city of Jerusalem. He appeared to Abraham and was called the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace. We know that Melchisedek was none other than Jesus Christ. He apparently ruled at that time over Jerusalem, perhaps with angels under His command, or perhaps even with righteous human beings about whom we have no record in the Bible. And so, God will *restore* to the city of Jerusalem, righteous judges, which it once had. But there will be a huge difference: Christ will rule from there, but this time, we—not angels, nor human beings—will rule with Him, if we qualify.

When Christ begins His rule over the earth, He will call everyone alive at that time to repent. And He will do exactly the same with those who answer the call, as He is doing with us today who have answered the call. He will give them happiness, peace and joy through His Spirit, replacing the hatred and constant sorrow and pain (Isaiah 57:15–21).

When we sin and become disobedient to God, we feel guilt and dissatisfaction. Then, when we come to our senses, repent bitterly, and cry out to God for forgiveness, He responds to our plea by restoring to us the joy of His salvation. God will do likewise to all of mankind in the Millennium, and beyond, who also repent of their sinful ways and cry out to God for forgiveness. He will restore the joy of His salvation to mankind. He originally offered that joy to Adam and Eve, but they rejected it. Every time we sin against God, we reject it too, and that joy is only restored to us upon repentance and forgiveness. And so, the same will be true for all mankind in the future. God will grant them the joy of salvation, but only if they want it.

Let us notice some additional examples of when God restored something in the past. As we go through them, it is important to keep in mind that these examples are *types* or forerunners of the full restoration on a grand scale, which will occur when Christ returns and begins to restore God’s Government over all the earth.

Chapter 2—The Two Trees

And so, Christ will RESTORE beauty to our planet.

In the process, Christ will also *restore* those from the nations of Israel and Judah who have remained alive, as well as from all the other nations (Isaiah 49:6). Christ will restore the remnant of Israel by bringing them back into the Promised Land. Today, only a very small percentage of the houses of Israel and Judah live in the Promised Land. Only some of the Jews (descendants of Judah, Levi and Benjamin) live there, and virtually no one of the descendants of the house of Israel. But the Promised Land, as we know it today, is not the kind of land that God had envisioned. Today, it is a land filled with violence, hatred and war. But once Christ has returned and has begun His rule, the Promised Land will be changed into a land flowing with milk and honey again, as it once was—a land of prosperity, beauty, peace, and abundance for everyone (Joel 2:23–27).

The modern nations of Israel and Judah will have been severely punished by God for their sins. They will have endured captivity and slavery. Survivors will be sick and feeble, and as nations, they will have been severely wounded and beaten. Jesus Christ, in restoring God’s rule over this earth, will change all of that (Jeremiah 30:16–17; 33:6–7).

God, in a prior fulfillment of prophecy, and as a type of His ultimate fulfillment, freed the ancient tribe of Judah out of Babylonian captivity and brought them back to the land of Judah. Jeremiah 27:22 says that God “restored” them to the land of Judah. So, here we see, to a limited extent, a type of restoration to the house of Judah. But this is only a very slim forerunner of the tremendous, all-encompassing restoration of both the houses of Israel and Judah, after Christ’s return, to restore all of them to the territory allotted to them.

GOD’S KINGDOM BEGINS

At Christ’s return, He will begin immediately to set up the Kingdom of God and will rule over all the earth as the King of kings and Lord of lords. However, Christ will not rule alone. We already read that the apostles will sit on thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel. We know from Revelation 20 that all of those who will be resurrected in the “first resurrection,” will sit on thrones, judging all of mankind. Those who are “in Christ” will start ruling in Jerusalem, but the

When God created the first human being, Adam, and his wife, Eve, He placed them in a garden—the Garden of Eden, also called Paradise. God also created two special trees in this garden—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He told man that he was allowed to eat from all the trees in the garden with the exception of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This means that man *could* eat, and *should have* eaten, from the tree of life.

These two trees had special symbolic meaning. They represented two ways of life: Eating from the tree of life would have meant following God in obedience to His Word, thereby reaping the benefits of happiness, joy and peace. Eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil meant disobeying God, and listening to and following Satan instead, thereby reaping the curses of unhappiness, sadness, suffering and war!

THE TREE OF LIFE

God said that man could eat FREELY from the tree of life. If man had done that, he would have received the free gift of the Holy Spirit of God, and with it, godly understanding and wisdom as to how to live. He would have received a down payment—a guarantee—of future eternal life, and he would have been changed—in due time—to an immortal Spirit being.

God WANTED Adam and Eve to partake of the tree of life—the Holy Spirit. Today also, God wants us—those He has specifically called for His salvation—to partake of the Holy Spirit, and to teach others about it.

When man partakes of the tree of life—symbolic of the Holy Spirit—then he reaps the benefits and responsibilities *already in this life*, as well as the gift of future eternal life.

For instance, Proverbs 11:30 tells us that the “fruit of the righteous is a tree of life.” This means that the good example of a godly lifestyle can influence others to follow that example. Someone who teaches and lives by the concept that we must be peacemakers—not warmongers—can, and does, influence others to think in the same

way and begin to change their life.

Proverbs 13:12 tells us that when we obtain something we have desired, it is a tree of life. Our ultimate desire, of course, is to be in the resurrection. In the meantime, though, if we promise something to someone, and we keep our promise, then that can be a motivation for others to follow our good example and to think about the reason WHY we do what we do. Again, our lifestyle can either make it easier, or more difficult, for people to respond to God's calling.

Proverbs 15:4 explains that a "wholesome tongue is a tree of life." The reason for this is that the words we choose can also be instrumental in others becoming interested in God's way of life. When we talk about repentance, forgiveness of sins, and the coming Kingdom of God at the time of Christ's return, some may be led to acceptance of the gospel message and, ultimately, to repentance and receipt of the Holy Spirit in this life. Of course, we must be living the way of life we talk about, or people can easily be turned away from the truth without even recognizing that it is the truth.

Proverbs 13:14 tells us that the "law of the wise is a FOUNTAIN of life." The law of the wise is the law of God—not our own law—as the ultimate fountain of life is with God (Psalm 36:9).

The Holy Spirit is many times compared with living waters. It flows into us and should flow out of us to others. That is, the *effect* of the Holy Spirit within us should be recognizable by others (John 4:7–14; John 7:37–39).

God is offering His Holy Spirit to just a few today, but the time will come when He will offer it to everyone. This was His purpose from the very beginning (Revelation 22:17; 21:6; Isaiah 12:3).

When God created a physical garden here on earth, with the tree of life in it, He patterned it after a spiritual garden in heaven. Lucifer was in that spiritual garden in heaven, before he rebelled and was cast to this earth. And so we find that even though the physical tree of life is no longer growing on this earth (presumably destroyed with the physical garden of Eden in the flood), there are still a spiritual garden and a tree of life in heaven today (Revelation 2:7). This spiritual garden and tree of life *WILL* be brought to this earth in the future, together with the heavenly Jerusalem—a spiritual city which God is preparing for us in heaven, and which will descend to a new

disciples that, once they were in the Kingdom of God, they would be sitting on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, along with Christ. But when, exactly, would this be? Christ said it would be "in the regeneration" (verse 28). This word, in the Greek, can mean re-creation, renewal, renovation, revival, new birth, rebirth or restoration. According to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, it means here, "Messianic restoration."

The disciples knew that Jesus Christ would come back to RESTORE the Kingdom or Government of God on this earth. God's rule was here once, but Satan took it away through his rebellion, and Adam and Eve failed to follow God and re-institute it. God's rule will include judging the nations—the nations of Israel and Judah, as well as the "Gentiles"—which is just a reference to non-Israelite nations.

In addition, Isaiah 58:12 tells us that when God's Kingdom is restored on this earth, beautiful cities will be built out of ruins. Those engaged in that task will be called the "Repairer of the Breach, *The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In*" (same verse). Destruction will cease, and construction will begin (Compare Isaiah 61:4).

At the time of Christ's return to this earth, mankind, under Satan's terrible influence, will have done their best to destroy this earth. They will have polluted this planet, and through man's selfishness and greed, many animals and plants will have become extinct. This planet will be filled with poisonous gas and with smoke and dust from nuclear weapons, hydrogen bombs, and other chemical and biological weapons. This earth will not be a nice place in which to live. In fact, it will be incapable of sustaining life. It will look like a wasteland, with only a few people left alive, as it must have looked after the Flood at the time of Noah. God will have to intervene, through Christ, to fix what man has destroyed under the rulership of Satan.

Isaiah 49:8 explains that Christ, the Messenger of the New Covenant, will come to "restore this earth" to its original beauty. The earth was so beautiful when it was created, that the angels praised God for it. They shouted for joy when they saw its awesome beauty (compare Job 38:4–7). This earth was not created void and empty. God is the Author of beauty and harmony. Whatever He does is beautiful and, indeed, reflects His character of light and brightness and splendor and glory.

Chapter 9—Restoration of All Things

When Jesus Christ comes back to this earth, as He said He would, this world will be in global turmoil, chaos and destruction, the likes of which there has never been in the entire history of human life. In fact, if Christ were not to return, mankind, under the TOTAL influence of Satan and his evil human instruments at that time, would completely annihilate all life on this entire planet! No human being would survive! Satan, the DESTROYER, would have reached his goal of totally DESTROYING all humans! Thankfully, Jesus Christ WILL come to stop war and to save mankind from utter destruction. He will give us—His called and chosen ones—eternal life, and He will dethrone Satan and strip him of all power to influence mankind during the Millennium.

WHAT WILL BE RESTORED?

Christ is coming back to RESTORE all things, and we are destined to help Him with that task. Acts 3:19–21 tells us that Christ will return, and when He does, the full restoration of all things will begin.

Let us review, in detail, what will be restored—what was taken away from this earth through Satan and his 6000 years of rulership, and what will be brought back.

The early apostles understood that the restoration of all things through Jesus Christ would include the establishment of the Kingdom or Government of God over the nations of Israel (Acts 1:6–8). Christ told them that it was not for them to know the exact time when God’s Kingdom would be *restored*, but that they were to proclaim the restoration of the Kingdom or Government of God on this earth in all the world as a witness.

How did the disciples know that Christ would restore the Kingdom of God over the nations of Israel and Judah? Obviously, they knew because Christ had taught them that. Where do we find such a teaching?

One such example is in Matthew 19:23–28. The context of the discussion was, entering the Kingdom of God. Christ told His twelve

earth (Revelation 21:1–2; 22:1–2, 14).

But there is also a warning for all of us today who want to eat from the tree of life, symbolizing living God’s righteous way of life. Revelation 22:18–19 only allows us to do so if we believe in God and His Word, and if we obey God.

TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

Adam and Eve did not eat from the tree of life, but they did eat, instead, from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God CREATED that tree, too, but He told man **NOT** to eat from it. He did not tempt man to sin, but He did test man, and by offering an opportunity to man to eat from the tree of life, He *enabled* man to obey Him.

However, man decided to disobey God and to obey, instead, the serpent—Satan the devil.

In not eating from the tree of life, and in eating, instead, from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, man made the decision to reject godly wisdom and eternal life, and to accept the wisdom of this world, which leads **only** to death. Man rejected God (Jeremiah 2:13; 17:13) and became the slave of Satan.

God had informed man of the *consequences* of his decision well in advance. Genesis 2:17 reports that God told them that they would die if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Presumably, He had also told them that they would have to live in sorrow and pain (compare Genesis 3:16–19).

But Satan, the deceitful and cunning serpent, told Eve something different. Genesis 3:4–5 explains that Satan deceived Eve by telling her that she would **NOT** die and that she would begin to “know good and evil.” In other words, Eve would be like God in DECIDING for herself what is good and what is evil. “DECIDING” is a better rendering here than “KNOWING,” because God had already told Adam and Eve, before He allowed Satan to approach man, what was good and what was evil.

Genesis 3:6 reports that Eve looked at the tree and concluded that it would make her wise, and so she ate from it and gave some to Adam to eat. By doing so, what man acquired was *human* wisdom, which is **CONTRARY** to the wisdom of God. The wisdom of God

can only come through the other tree—the tree of life—the Holy Spirit. And so, man has used his own human reasoning ever since to create his own world and try to solve his own problems (1 Corinthians 2:1–7; 3:18–20). Unfortunately, the result has generally been only unspeakable pain, suffering, misery, and death (Romans 3:10–18).

In Genesis 3:22–24, we read that God drove man out of Paradise, since man had sinned by disobeying God and rejecting His Way of Life.

Matthew Henry writes in his *Commentary*: “The reason God gave why He shut man out of paradise; not only because he had put forth his hand, and taken of the tree of knowledge, which was his sin, but lest he should again put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life and flatter himself with a conceit that thereby he should live for ever [sic].”

The *Commentary of Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* adds: “This tree [of life] being a pledge of immortal life with which obedience should be rewarded, man lost...all claim to this tree; and therefore, that he might not eat of it or delude himself with the idea that eating of it would restore what he had forfeited, the Lord sent him forth from the garden.”

Of course, God did not allow Adam and Eve to eat from the tree of life because He did not see any repentance or godly remorse in Adam and Eve for what they had done.

God did not destroy the garden and the tree of life at that time. He had angelic beings—cherubim—guard the entrance to it.

The *Nelson Study Bible* states: “The fact that the tree of life remained, even though guarded by angels and a sword, was a ray of hope. Is it not possible that the very fact He guarded it, but did not uproot it signify that one day its fruit may be eaten again? Indeed, one day we will see it again (Rev. 22:2). Adam and Eve were no longer welcome in God’s presence, but they had the hope that one day Paradise would be regained.”

Suffering, pain, misery, and even death entered this physical world with Adam and Eve’s decision to disobey God and follow Satan instead. And since man has, in general, continued to disregard God’s injunctions, suffering continues to this day.

This brings up a hypothetical question.

“... look forward to the coming of the day of God, and WORK to hasten it on.” Similarly the *New Jewish Bible*: “...while you wait for the day of God to come, and try to hasten its coming.” The *New Bible Commentary* emphasizes: “‘Hastening’ stresses the importance of human activity.”

How can WE hasten the return of Jesus Christ?

The awesome truth is that our personal conduct might have an influence on when Jesus Christ will return to this earth. Isaiah 62:7 encourages us to give the LORD “no rest till He establishes And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.” Jerusalem is not going to become a praise in the earth while Satan is ruling this present evil world—that will only happen in the world to come.

At one time, before God called us, Satan worked in and through us, and we worked for him. But now, we are supposed to be working for and with God for a better world to come (Ephesians 2:10; 1 Corinthians 15:58). We are God’s fellow workers (1 Corinthians 3:9), working for His kingdom (Colossians 4:11). So then, when we face trials, let us not become discouraged and allow ourselves to think about giving up. Rather, we need to understand that Satan is very angry, not wanting that anyone should be saved, but that all should perish. He will confront us with many problems in an attempt to persuade us to give up. But Christ encourages us with these words: “Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4).

We need to understand that, once God called us to come out of this world, we then became subject to God’s Government and rulership, and, as such, God does not allow Satan to bring any trial or temptation upon us which we are unable to bear, or which we cannot endure or resist or overcome. **We are being trained today, sometimes through suffering and trials, to overcome Satan, his evil society, and our own selfish desires.** This is sometimes a painful process, requiring that we make some tough choices. But it is all worth it. Ultimately, “There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things [including this evil Satanic world] have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

God does not want us to love what Satan loves and what he offers us. Adam and Eve followed Satan, but Christ, the “last Adam,” OVERCAME Satan. He *rejected* Satan’s offer to worship him and to accept his way of thinking—and so must we, every day! We must reject this world and what it stands for, and we must reject the current, temporary god of this world—Satan. **That is one reason why God allows Satan to continue His persecutions—so that we get so tired of this world and its spiritual leader, that we want to have no part in it—so that we really want the better world to come.**

In Egypt, God allowed the first several plagues to affect Israel, right along with Egypt. God could have spared Israel from all ten plagues, but He did not. **He wanted Israel to see the difference, to experience what it means to be under God’s government, and what it means to be under Satan’s rule.**

We are to cry over the abominations we see in this world, because they are so grievous! Satan and his demons can temporarily afflict us, just as they afflicted Job, Daniel, and those who were sick because of Satan—including Paul.

This is sobering! It should make us realize that **this evil world, which is ruled by Satan, is not our home!** We are awaiting a better homeland—a better country or fatherland—to be ushered in by none other than our Creator—Jesus Christ!

How, then, are we to work for God’s better world? By overcoming our worldly ways as quickly as possible—giving up whatever hold Satan still has on us or whatever residual societal influence we still treasure.

We can also work for God’s better world to come by not being guilty of delaying Christ’s coming. How could we possibly be guilty of delaying Christ’s coming? By not repenting of our wrong desires and actions, or by not desiring that God’s Kingdom come quickly, or by not doing our part in preaching the gospel in all the world and feeding the flock.

HASTENING THE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST

We are told in 2 Peter 3:12 that we are to “hasten” the coming or return of Jesus Christ. The *Living Bible* says: “You should look forward to the day and hurry it along.” The *Revised English Bible* states:

What *would have happened* IF Adam and Eve had eaten from the tree of life, while also *refusing* to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thus fully obeying God?

There would have been, presumably, no weapons or war; no killing of Abel through Cain; no hunger, famine, hard labor, misery or pain; no slavery; and no vicious animals. Instead, this earth would have been a happy place—a peaceful, prosperous, free world!

BUT—due to Adam and Eve’s wrong decision, this world witnessed murder when Cain killed his brother, Abel. It witnessed polygamy (Genesis 4:19); weapons made of bronze and iron (Genesis 4:22); more violence and murder (Genesis 4:23); and finally, grievous worldwide wickedness (Genesis 6:5–6, 11–13).

Even though God shut man off, in general, from access to the tree of life, some would be called to partake of it, including righteous Abel (Hebrews 11:4), Enoch (Genesis 5:22) and Noah (Genesis 6:8–9).

HEBREW FAIRY TALES?

Some people claim that the events we read about in the first chapters of the book of Genesis, are just Hebrew fairy tales. They say that these stories were invented by humans to explain the existence of man and the existence of evil, as well as pain and suffering.

Did the events, which the Bible describes, actually take place? Was there a garden? Did Adam and Eve exist? What about Cain and Abel?

Many cultures around the world have very similar accounts of the creation of man and a lost Paradise. This suggests that they all go back to real, literal events.

Halley’s Bible Handbook explains: “Ancient Babylonian inscriptions say: ‘Near Eridu was a garden, in which was a mysterious Sacred Tree, a Tree of Life, planted by the gods, whose roots were deep, while its branches reached to heaven, protected by guardian spirits, and no man enters.’... Early Babylonian inscriptions abound in references to a ‘tree of life,’ from which man was driven, by the influence of an evil spirit personified in a serpent, and to which he was prevented from returning by guardian cherubs...”

Halley summarizes other traditions, as follows: “Persian: our first parents, innocent, virtuous, and happy, lived in a Garden, where there

was a Tree of Immortality, till an evil spirit in the form of a Serpent appeared... Chinese: had a tradition of a happy age, when men had an abundance of food, surrounded by peaceful animals.”

More importantly, **Jesus Christ Himself confirmed** in the New Testament the accuracy of the events surrounding Adam and Eve and their offspring. He spoke of the creation of Adam and Eve and the first marriage as literal events (Matthew 19:3–6). He confirmed in John 8:44 that Satan was a murderer from the beginning. He also alluded in Matthew 23:34–35 to the fact that Abel was killed by Cain. Christ quite obviously believed in and taught the literal accuracy of the events described in the first chapters of the book of Genesis.

In fact, if there was no Adam, then Jesus Christ would not have existed as a human being. According to Luke 3:23, 38, Christ, in the flesh, was a descendant of Adam—“the son of God.” 1 Corinthians 15:22 tells us that all die in Adam, and that all will be made alive in Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:45, 47 states that the first Adam was made from the earth and became a living being, and that the “last Adam”—Jesus Christ—became a “life-giving spirit.”

The New Testament writes continuously about the existence of Adam and Eve and the events in the Garden of Eden as historical facts:

In 1 Timothy 2:13–14, we see that Adam was created first, and that Eve was deceived. We see, in 2 Corinthians 11:3, that the serpent deceived Eve. Hebrews 11:4 says that Abel offered “a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” In 1 John 3:12, John confirms that Cain was of Satan and that he killed his brother, Abel (compare, too, Hebrews 12:24). Finally, Jude 14 explains that Enoch was “the seventh from Adam.”

There is no lie that can come out of the truth, and it is impossible for God to lie. If Christ lied, then we would have no Savior. And if the Bible teaches lies, it would be useless.

Rather, the events described in the first few chapters of the book of Genesis were very real, and they have tremendous meaning for us today! **They explain WHY we experience pain and suffering today, and they also tell us how we, individually, can AVOID, to an extent, the experience of UNNECESSARY suffering.** To a large degree, individual suffering results from individual wrong

world to come. Hebrews 11:9–10, 13–16 explains that God’s disciples *DESIRE* a better world, and Hebrews 13:14 confirms that they *SEEK* a better world to come.

We must ask ourselves, daily, how much do we still love this world, the ways of this world, and the material things that this world has to offer? **Could it be that our misplaced love for the world and what is in the world is a reason why God allows Satan to bring trials and difficulties upon us?** Do we still love the things of this world too much—whether it is its money, hobbies, houses, cars, or other physical possessions? **Does God allow us to go through trials so that we can learn the lesson that none of these things can give us any lasting security or even happiness?**

In 1 John 2:15–17 we read, from the *Living Bible*: “Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love these things you show that you do not really love God; for all these worldly things, these evil desires—the craze for sex, the ambition to buy everything that appeals to you, and the pride that comes from wealth and importance—these are not from God. They are from this evil world itself. And this world is fading away, and these evil, forbidden things will go with it, but whoever keeps doing the will of God will live forever.”

A BETTER WORLD TO COME

Christ was not of this world. He worked for a better world—not a world ruled by Satan or human beings controlled by Satan. Christ qualified to become the KING of the world to come. He *QUALIFIED* by resisting Satan and overcoming him; by preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God; by teaching His disciples everything the Father taught Him; by healing and helping the afflicted; by doing good to others; and by laying down His very life for us. He showed through His life that He practiced what He preached. He helped His disciples, and is helping us today, to qualify for a better world, as He Himself qualified. He overcame Satan’s world, and He wants us to overcome Satan’s world, as well. And when we stumble or fall, He is there to pick us up. When we sin, we can repent and be forgiven. **We have no reason to give up!** God wants us to succeed, and He expects of us to do so. He does not want us to give up!

We are to be delivered from this evil world, as Galatians 1:3–4 points out. The *Authorized Version* says that God will “deliver us from this present evil world.” Thus, we are not to participate in this world’s ways.

Christ had to go through trials because Satan wanted to destroy Him. It was Satan who tried to kill Him, literally, at His birth, and it was Satan who possessed Judas to betray Jesus and have Him murdered. Further, Satan tried again and again to destroy Christ spiritually throughout His life (Luke 4:13)—tempting Him to sin, just once. That’s all it would have taken...just one sin. But Christ NEVER sinned! Satan fought against Jesus because He knew that Jesus had come to qualify as the next King, to ultimately replace him, and Satan knew that just ONE SIN would defeat Christ’s purpose.

Satan once ruled over us. We were subject to Satan’s way, and actually, were held captive by him. We escaped his rulership and came under God’s authority when He chose to call us out of Satan’s world. It should not be surprising then, that Satan fights us, treating us as traitors. Satan knows that we are in the process of qualifying to **replace him** and his demons. And so, Satan wants us dead, spiritually.

Ephesians 6:12 confirms that we are to FIGHT Satan and his demons. The *Authorized Version* says that we are to fight “against the rulers of the darkness of the world.” It is a fight for survival—a life and death battle—and it is not to be taken lightly. We are to fight Satan’s temptations (1 Peter 5:8–9). We must conquer his evil devices that entice us to sin. We must reject sin, which so easily ensnares us. We are to defeat his fiery darts of doubt, discouragement, hopelessness and fear, and we can only do so if we follow God’s mighty lead in our lives, through His Spirit dwelling in us.

NOT OUR WORLD!

As God’s “firstfruits,” we are becoming more of a spectacle to this world, which recognizes us as being strangely different. If we were of the world, the world would love us. But since we are not of this world, the world hates us, as Christ told us.

We are not citizens of Satan’s world, but foreigners (1 Peter 2:11). We presently live in this world, yet we look forward to the better

choices. Many times, our personal suffering may be the result of wrong choices we have made, or of wrong things we have said or done. For instance, James 3:1–12 warns us that the misuse of our tongue can create much harm for others and for ourselves.

Every time we decide to sin, we eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Every time we overcome sin, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we are willing to partake of the tree of life. Adam and Eve failed in this, but we are called upon to do better, and to succeed! WE ARE COMMANDED TO CHOOSE LIFE—to eat freely and continuously from the tree of life and to reap its benefits—now, and in the future.

Chapter 3—Who Is in Control?

In times of personal and national uncertainties, trials and sufferings; in times of setbacks and sickness; in times of death and calamity; we might ask ourselves: Who is actually in control? Who directs our lives? Does God really exist?

The simple answer is, yes, God does exist, and He is very much in control over the affairs of this world. He is also very involved in our own individual lives, even though it may not appear so at times.

Your immediate reaction might be, But how can this be? We saw in the first chapter of this booklet that this is Satan's world, not God's. How then can God be in control?

WHAT ABOUT SATAN AND HIS FORCES OF EVIL?

As we have already established, Satan is called the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4, *Authorized Version*). He rules from his throne, right here on the earth (Revelation 2:13). He and his demons are the current “rulers of the darkness of this world” (Ephesians 6:12, *Authorized Version*).

Satan has been given all authority over the kingdoms of this world (Luke 4:6–7; Matthew 4:8–9). This includes authority over continental Europe, Russia, China, India, as well as the United States of America, Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand—the WHOLE WORLD. Satan can give this authority to whomever he wants. Christ did not dispute Satan's claim—Christ knew that Satan was right, while Satan was trying to tempt Him.

Is there a conflict then? Is it Satan or God who has control over man?

There is no conflict. Although God has not yet taken Satan from his earthly throne, **Satan can only do what God allows him to do! Satan is still subject to God's Will.**

For instance, to carry out God's plan for mankind, God has retained the right to determine WHERE and HOW LONG the nations and their kings will rule (Genesis 15:13–16; compare Deuteronomy 32:8 with Acts 17:26).

God is in control as to WHO should rule OVER a nation (Psalm 75:4–7; Daniel 2:20–21; 4:17; 5:18–28, 30–31; John 19:10–11; Hosea 13:11).

Chapter 8—Working for a Better World!

Today, we are surrounded with problems that can be deeply discouraging. We might be tempted at times to just throw in the towel—give up—go on no more.

Why does God allow these trials? Why doesn't He just intervene and take us away from it all—or, at least, take *the trials* away from us.

God doesn't work that way. He allows us to go through trials, for a purpose.

Again, let us remember why there are *trials in this world*—why this world is a world filled with problems, with no human solutions in sight.

NOT GOD'S WORLD!

It needs to be repeated again and again: This is NOT God's world! This is Satan's world. Satan is not a builder of a better world—rather, he is the *destroyer* of this present world.

Satan has rulership over all the kingdoms of this earth, and Satan will stay on his throne until Jesus Christ, the future King over the earth, returns to replace Satan. God does not RULE this world, **yet**. Rulership is still given to Satan and his demons.

At the same time, Daniel 7:26–27 makes it clear that we are called to inherit, in the future, a better world, but only if we are counted worthy to attain that age to come. We must OVERCOME Satan, Satan's society, and Satan's desires in us. If we OVERCOME NOW, we will be granted to judge or rule the earth, under Christ, to help create a better world—in the not-too-distant future (1 Corinthians 6:2).

Today, we are not to participate in judging or ruling or governing this world. Rather, we are to learn how to rule or govern ourselves! Again, this is Satan's world—not God's. At this present time, we are merely ambassadors of a better world to come (2 Corinthians 5:20).

We are not a part of this present evil world, as Christ was not a part of this present evil world, either. He said in John 18:36 that His kingdom was not of this world.

But as we said, our hope in God includes our present condition as well. And God offers us hope for His help here and now! Rather than looking at our physical circumstances, which can and will make us depressed, we must look at the living Christ in us, leading us out of our trials and suffering—the physical realm—to a spiritual understanding, which goes far beyond what the human brain may grasp.

When we are depressed in this life, we need to focus on our future. God is always there to encourage us. And the greatest encouragement He could possibly give us, is to reassure us and to remind us of our future, which is as certain as the next sunset. Once we have entered our ultimate human potential, we will be free from pain, suffering, disease, sickness and disappointment. All sufferings will be a thing of the past. God will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and crying and pain won't exist anymore for us (compare Revelation 21:4).

Today, more often than not, we can only comfort suffering people with words. But when we, in the future, have become born-again members in God's Family, WE will be able to do away with *their* pain and *their* suffering. Creation waits and hopes for us, because WE will be granted the awesome privilege, under the leadership of God the Father and Jesus Christ, to free it from its decay. That is our hope! That is our destiny! That is the reason we must go on, in spite of temporary depression, setbacks, frustration and despair. That is the reason we are willing to give up things in this life, which the world enjoys. That is the reason, if need be, why we would rather live with affliction, pain and suffering, than with riches and the temporary pleasures of sin.

Jesus Christ, the hope of our glory, is waiting for us to help Him to free this entire world from suffering and pain. Let us continue to wait and hope eagerly for His return to this earth to begin this mighty task.

A TIME OF NATIONAL SUFFERING

We are told in Isaiah 10:5–7 that God will bring modern Assyria (Germany) and its modern king or leader “against an ungodly nation.” The ungodly nation here refers to the modern house of Israel, mainly the United States of America and Great Britain. Even though the nation professes to believe in God, God calls the entire nation ungodly. The aforementioned king of Assyria is also referred to in Scripture as the beast (For more details, please read our free booklets, “*Europe in Prophecy*” and “*The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord.*”).

Notice that it is SATAN, the “dragon,” who gives his power and authority to the beast (Revelation 13:4). But Satan can only do it because “it was granted to him...” (Revelation 13:7). Although Satan gives his power to the beast (a soon-coming United States of Europe, led by modern Assyria or Germany), it is ONLY because God allows it, for His express purpose. It is God who will see to it that modern Assyria will fight, *victoriously*, against the United States of America and Great Britain.

WHY is God going to allow this future war and more suffering?

God will see the absolute necessity to *punish* modern Israel, in the same way that He used Nebuchadnezzar in ancient times to punish ancient Judah. Habakkuk 1:5–6 confirms that the modern Chaldeans—the modern Italians and other people in central and southwestern Europe—will also be used by God to *punish* the “ungodly nation” of the modern “house of Israel” (For more information, as to where the modern house of Israel can be found today, please read our free booklet, “*The Fall and Rise of Britain and America.*”).

Since this IS Satan's world, God allows Satan to use very wicked rulers to govern for a while, inflicting much suffering and pain on mankind. But He encourages us to always look at the end, considering in the meantime that man's evil ways only produce misery and pain (Proverbs 16:4; Job 21:30; 2 Peter 2:9), which is so clearly evident all around us, every day.

We must be careful not to try to step ahead of God—not to take matters into our own hands. God is in control—and we must accept that fact and patiently wait for Him to show us what to do in a given situation.

Voting in governmental elections may fall into that category. Fighting in war might be another aspect of it. Or marrying a non-Christian, because one doubts that God can, or will, provide a Christian with a suitable mate. Abraham and Sarah thought they had to do something to help God out—so they produced Ishmael through Sarah’s handmaid, rather than waiting for God to give them a son through Sarah, as God had promised.

Unless the time is ripe for a change according to God’s plan, our human efforts would be futile and meaningless, anyhow. And when the time has arrived, GOD will bring it about in accordance with His purpose. He does not need your little check mark on a ballot for a political candidate.

In addition, notice that God said in Hosea 8:4 that the people of Israel “set up kings, but not by Me.” Israel decided whom they wanted to have as a king, without considering God’s Will in the matter. This was also true, in a general way, when ancient Israel asked Samuel for a king. God never wanted Israel to have kings, but they insisted on being like all of the other nations around them. Back then, God did choose and appoint Saul as their first king, followed by David.

However, Hosea 8:4 addresses primarily the *end time* and the *modern* house of Israel. God says that He does not appoint their kings and princes—that they appoint those themselves, but do not ask God for His input and direction. So God turns His back on them and does not acknowledge the outcome of some of their governmental elections. This means that not everyone who comes to power these days has been directly appointed by God. But, God allowed it to happen, of course.

subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it *in hope...*”

The whole creation is in hope. The whole universe is hoping. But hoping for what?

Romans 8:21 continues: “...because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption [better: decay] INTO the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

The creation, which is subject to decay, is waiting, in hope, for our transformation to glory. The creation has this kind of hope. The question is, do we have this hope, even in times of severe trials, tests and suffering? It is a hope that cannot really be described in human terms. It is the hope of becoming a glorified, resurrected, everlasting child of God—a member of the Family of God. It is the hope of becoming a God being, freed from pain, suffering, despair, depression, hopelessness and helplessness—freed from this mortal, temporary, decaying body. It is the hope of obtaining God’s glory, the very same glory that God has (Romans 5:1–2). That is our hope. That is why we must be willing to suffer and endure in this life. That is why we must be making an effort to overcome and conquer hopelessness, turning to God and asking for His help.

Colossians 1:27 tells us that Christ, who is living in us, is the hope of our glory—the hope that we will obtain God’s glory, as well as Christ’s glory. It is Christ who will glorify us when He gives us glorified bodies at the time of our change (if we are still alive at Christ’s return) or of our resurrection (if we died before His return). We can have this hope, as long as Christ lives in us. He is the One, as we read in Romans 8, who will give us our glorious liberty—our freedom from everything that is detrimental to that glory.

So we see, then, the hope that motivates us to go on in this life, in spite of difficulties, goes far beyond THIS present life. Our hope cannot be limited to this life only. That is why Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:19: “*If in this life only* we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.” Why is that? Because we are willing to suffer **for our future**—for our resurrection or change, for our hope to come. And we are willing to give up certain pleasures in this life, if this is necessary to obtain the hope of our glory. This hope, which is directed toward our future, enables us to endure present sufferings.

Chapter 4—Time and Chance?

above what we see with our eyes on a human level.

When the Jews were in captivity, God was still there. He assured them of a brighter future, telling them what thoughts He had towards them. Jeremiah 29:11 says: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

Many times, the conditions in which we find ourselves seem to be hopeless. And looking at them from just a human perspective, they might very well be. At that point, we have made ourselves an easy target for Satan to enter our minds and to feed on our human reasoning, until we become hopelessly frustrated and discouraged. In this process, have we actually forgotten, or failed to believe, that God is still on His throne, watching to see if we will ask Him for His help and for His hope?

In the book of Ezekiel, we are introduced to the entire house of Israel. They are pictured as dead and gone. They are nothing but dry bones, and God, in this vision, lets them speak. And so they say, in a figurative and symbolic sense: “Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!” (Ezekiel 37:11).

How many people may think that way when they visit the grave of a deceased loved one? How many wonder whether they will ever see them again? How many are suffering mental anguish and pain because they just don’t know!?

But God knows! Man’s hope, even in death, is not lost at all; in fact, God shows Ezekiel in that same vision that all of the house of Israel who died, will be brought back to life (Ezekiel 37:12–14). And the Bible says elsewhere that EVERY human being who has ever lived and died will be brought back to life. This truth is most comforting and reassuring! Yes, we WILL see our deceased loved ones again! (For more information, please read our free booklet: “*Do We Have an Immortal Soul?*”)

God has thoughts of hope for all men. And even in this life, when we think that our hope is lost, God may revive us in ways we could not even anticipate.

Romans 8 makes clear that the entire creation is subjected to futility and decay. But God’s plan is not to leave the creation in such a state. Rather, God tells us in Romans 8:20: “For the creation was

Generally speaking, and barring situations where God intervenes in the human affairs of this world to bring about certain aspects of His overall plan for mankind, it IS true that this world is cut off from God, due to the first sin by Adam and Eve. When man decided to disobey God, God decided to cut off man’s access to Him and His Way of Life (with some notable exceptions, as we mentioned already).

Even though God is in ultimate control, **He is allowing** Satan to rule this world, until the chosen successor—Jesus Christ—returns to establish God’s Kingdom here on the earth. Jesus Christ has **ALREADY** qualified to replace Satan, by overcoming him, but He will not take over rulership until He comes a second time to this earth.

In the meantime, man is pretty much on his own. Man lives a wrong way of life and suffers the consequences. Man, having rejected God and His authority over him, follows Satan and his evil devices, as well as the desires of his own heart. He is not subject to God’s law and His Way of Life, and without God’s Spirit dwelling within him, he cannot be submissive to God (Romans 8:7).

VICTIMS OF TIME AND CHANCE?

And so, man might very well be a victim of time and chance. He might die in an accident, or he might be killed in war. He might suffer terrible trials, only because he might have been in the wrong place at the wrong time. But this does not mean that God was unaware of what was happening. God takes note of everything, and when Adam and Eve sinned against Him in the Garden of Eden, He determined that He would allot man about 6,000 years to rule himself—to develop his own governments, institutions, ideologies, civilizations, and religions. God Himself chose to not be directly involved, except on specific occasions (as discussed before) when God needed to intervene in order to ensure that His preordained plan would be accomplished.

God made the decision NOT to intervene, in general, in the *affairs of this world*, in order to **teach man the lesson that, without God, man is incapable of ever living happily or peaceably.**

But, does this apply to true Christians as well? Do Christians suffer

and die BECAUSE OF time and chance?

Nowhere is this concept taught in Scripture! Actually, the Biblical proof that true Christians do NOT suffer or die because of time and chance is overwhelming.

Those who claim and teach this erroneous concept quote as proof a passage in Ecclesiastes 9:11, which states: “I returned and saw under the sun that—The race is not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong, Nor bread to the wise, Nor riches to men of understanding, Nor favor to men of skill; But time and chance happen to them all.”

“Chance” is commonly understood as the probability that anything could happen to us. As we will see, using this definition, it would be IMPOSSIBLE to say that the Bible teaches that just about “anything” could happen to true Christians.

According to the Jewish *Tanakh* Bible, the last phrase in Ecclesiastes 9:11 is a euphemism, simply pointing out that all will die. But the question still remains, HOW will they die?

TRUE CHRISTIANS NOT SUBJECT TO TIME AND CHANCE

Note what Solomon said: “Time and chance happen to THEM all.” He did NOT say—“to all men,” or “to all of us.” In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon was mainly addressing and writing about people in this world—people who only live and work for material possessions (Ecclesiastes 5:13–17), or people who do not understand God’s plan (Ecclesiastes 8:17). When he addressed true Christians, however, he referred to them as “you” (compare Ecclesiastes 9:10: “Whatever YOUR hand finds to do, do it with YOUR might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where YOU are going.”).

The Hebrew word for “chance,” in Ecclesiastes 9:11, is “*pega*.” It is only used one additional time in the entire Old Testament, namely in 1 Kings 5:4. There, Solomon (the author of the book of Ecclesiastes) said: “But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor evil occurrence (in Hebrew, “*pega*”).”

Again, we see that Solomon is making a distinction between the people living in this world, being cut off from God, and those whom God has called to His Way of Life, including himself. Solomon said

and age—to be with Him in His Kingdom, **not because we deserve it, but because of God’s compassion, mercy and love for us.**

When the prophet Jonah wanted to die just because God did not destroy Nineveh, God did not respond to this request by fulfilling Jonah’s plea. Rather, God knew that Jonah would overcome his feelings of depression and hopelessness, once he understood God’s character and nature. And so, **God revealed to Jonah His mercy, compassion and love for ALL people.** He told Jonah that he should have rejoiced over the fact that God IS merciful and compassionate, and that He does not want to see sinners die, but rather—in due time—that sinners would repent and live (Jonah 4:11). It seems likely that Jonah came to understand this lesson of *how great is God’s love, mercy and compassion for all people*, as tradition tells us that it was he who wrote the book of Jonah.

Finally, what did God tell the prophet Jeremiah, when Jeremiah became angry with God, telling Him in a state of frustration and depression, that God could not be trusted or relied upon?

Jeremiah 15:19–21, in the rendering of the *Living Bible*, states: “...Stop this foolishness and talk some sense! Only if you return to trusting me will I let you continue as my spokesman. You are to influence them, not let them influence you! They will fight against you like a besieging army against a high city wall. But they will not conquer you for I am with you to protect and deliver you, says the Lord. Yes, I will certainly deliver you from these wicked men and rescue you from their ruthless hands.”

GOD OFFERS HOPE

In all those aforementioned cases of depression, frustration and hopelessness, God offered HOPE, and He showed in mighty ways that He is merciful and compassionate, to all people. Just as God gave Moses, Elijah, Jonah, Job and Jeremiah hope, He also will give us hope in times of trials and suffering (Psalm 39:7; 78:7; 147:11; Lamentations 3:24–26).

We must never forget that God is there when we go through trials and become frustrated and disillusioned because of much suffering and pain. God wants us to place our hope in HIM. God is merciful and kind, and whatever He does, or allows to happen, has a purpose

GOD IS THERE TO HELP US

But in moments of despair, frustration, hopelessness and depression, GOD IS STILL THERE! God has not left us, just as He did not leave any of those saints we just read about. God is watching over His people, and He is there to help us, giving us strength and encouragement to go on and reach our ultimate goal—entrance into His Kingdom.

When Moses was filled with hopelessness, wanting to give up, and was even willing to die because he thought he was too weak to lead all the people, God gave him help and encouragement. It is difficult to believe that Moses, in fact, would have been too weak to lead the people alone, because he was not alone—God was with him, and God is with us too. God understands our human frailty, and He knows that sometimes, especially when we fall into a state of despair, we need some outward “proof” of God’s presence and His mighty power. God did give Moses help, in that He poured out His Spirit over seventy people, who would then be able to help Moses to lead the nation (Numbers 11:16–17).

When the prophet Elijah wished to die, because he thought that he was all alone—that everyone else had forsaken God and had become a follower of Baal—God appeared to him in a remarkable way. He showed Elijah that He was still with him, and that others had not forsaken God, either—even from a human standpoint, Elijah was NOT alone (1 Kings 19:9–18).

In the example of Job, after Job came to understand the purpose for his sufferings, God changed his condition and even gave him double of what he had before. Job lived another 140 years after his trials. We learn from James that the main purpose for Job’s sufferings was for Job to learn something about himself, but even more importantly, to learn something about God (James 5:11). Job had to learn how compassionate and merciful God is—that without the trials Job went through, bringing him to the point of true repentance, he would not have been able to enter the Kingdom of God. But because of God’s mercy and compassion, Job was able to endure his trials and suffering and to learn his vital lessons. God could have killed Job at any time, or He could have left him alone, but God clearly *WANTED* Job to make it, as He wants all of us—those whom He has called in this day

that “evil occurrence” or “chance” did not govern his own life, because God was involved in his life and had given him rest. Christ made the same distinction, in Luke 13:1–5:

“There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but UNLESS YOU repent, YOU will ALL LIKEWISE perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but UNLESS YOU repent, YOU will all LIKEWISE perish.’”

Christ’s teaching is unmistakable: If we don’t repent, we might very well die as those did, on whom the tower of Siloam fell; that is, through an accident, apart from, or being cut off from God, by time and chance. If we repent, however, according to Christ, we will NOT likewise perish or die in that way. Rather, even if we were to die in an “accident,” God would have *specifically*—not just “generally”—DECIDED not to intervene and to LET US die. God is always in control over our lives. Nothing happens to us, which God is not aware of and which God does not “approve of” (compare Job 1:21–22; 2:10).

True Christians are NOT in the “hand” of time and chance. Rather, Solomon tells US: “... the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God” (Ecclesiastes 9:1). David understood, too, that he was in God’s hands. He wrote, in Psalm 31:15: “My times are in Your hand.” He knew that he was always, constantly, and completely under God’s observation, His protection, and in His loving care (compare, Psalm 4:7–8; 9:9–10; 17:8; 23:1–6; 33:18–19; 34: 7, 15, 19–20, etc. etc.), as are all true Christians today. God promises that nothing will happen to us that is too difficult for us to bear (compare 1 Corinthians 10:13). This means, then, that God must be watching us every second to guarantee the fulfillment of His promise.

This also means that He is present with us when we go through suffering, including sickness. For instance, God has promised us healing from sickness. But sometimes, God does not seem to heal us at all,

or at least, not right away. Why? Is this because we ARE subject to “time and chance?” Absolutely NOT! For more information, please read our free booklet, *“Sickness and Healing in the Bible.”*

The concept that we might be “overtaken” by a trial because God was not aware of it, or because it happened “so quickly” that He could not have prevented it, is ludicrous! Isaiah 40:27–31 and Isaiah 43:2 prove the opposite. Psalm 56:8; 139:1–6 and Matthew 6:8 show, too, how MUCH God is aware of *everything* pertaining to us. Romans 8:28 tells us that all things work together for good to those who love God. The only way that EVERYTHING can work for our good is that GOD will work it out for our good—and not “time and chance.”

The very idea that a true Christian could die or become terribly sick because of time and chance, limits God and weakens our faith. It is a patently unbiblical concept. When a Christian dies, it is because GOD has DECIDED that it was time for His son or daughter to die. Notice God’s involvement, when it comes to the death of a true Christian, as clearly revealed in Scripture. There is simply NO ROOM for “time and chance”:

Isaiah 57:1–2 states: “The righteous perishes, And no man takes it to heart; Merciful men are taken away, While no one considers That the righteous is taken away from evil. He shall enter into peace; They shall rest in their beds, Each one walking in his uprightness.”

Psalm 116:15 teaches: “Precious in the SIGHT OF the LORD Is the death of His saints.” (Compare, too, Psalm 72:14). So, God’s people just don’t die without the knowledge of God. Rather, they die in God’s SIGHT!

Revelation 14:13 points out: “Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.’”

Let us hear, then, the conclusion of the matter, as expressed by Paul in Romans 14:8. Did Paul teach that we are hopeless and helpless victims of time and chance? Quite the opposite is true: “For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, WE ARE THE LORD’S.”

To reiterate; this world, generally speaking, is cut off from God

including feelings of discouragement. Let’s review some of those accounts, and gain courage in understanding how Satan’s attempts were thwarted.

Moses argued with God at a time when he felt that his task, responsibility, or job was too difficult for him. It was just too demanding. There was no way that he could do it, he thought, and so he was willing to give up (Numbers 11:11–15). Moses thought that death was a relief from his trials. But God had something else in mind. Moses still had a great job to do, and God knew that Moses could do it—although Moses thought that he could not.

The prophet Elijah is another one of the spiritual giants of the Bible. But he was just a human being, no different than we. James 5:17 explains that Elijah was just “a man with a nature like ours.” He was not immune to human temptations or Satanic temptations. At one time, Elijah performed a very mighty deed, executing all the priests of Baal after God had approved Elijah as His prophet in front of all the people. But then he heard that the wicked and evil queen Jezebel, a follower of Baal, wanted to kill him. That should not have come as a surprise to him. After all, what did he expect? He became frustrated and depressed, so much so, that he ran away and was even willing to die (1 Kings 19:1–4).

Have you ever had moments like this? One day, you feel so close to God, as if you could move mountains. But then, something goes wrong in your life and you are confronted with a severe trial, and you fall into utter despair, wishing you were dead and it would all be over.

Job certainly had moments like that. While he was being tested, he experienced momentary feelings of depression, wishing he was dead. He even stated during this time of frustration and hopelessness, that it would have been better if he had never been born (Job 3:11, 13, 20–22; 7:11–15; 10:18–21). But God had to allow Job to go through a lot of suffering in order to learn some very necessary lessons.

The prophet Jonah, too, had moments of despair when he wanted to be dead, simply because he did not want to do what God had asked him to do, nor did he like what God was doing (Jonah 4:3, 8).

Another one of the great prophets, Jeremiah, also fell into depression at times (Jeremiah 15:10, 17–18; 20:14–18).

Chapter 7—Discouragement— And How to Conquer It

All of us have become discouraged at times, especially during severe trials and suffering. We may even question why we are here, what we are doing, and what is the purpose of it all. We all have experienced, to some degree, those nagging feelings of despair, helplessness, or even hopelessness. Life may not seem to make any sense, and what difference does it make, anyway? We may be tempted to just give up, throw in the towel, walk away from whatever we are struggling with. We may ask ourselves, What's the use? Why go on like this...?

SATAN ATTACKS GOD'S PEOPLE

These feelings are very human and actually quite common to many people, but they are not right. They must be conquered and overcome. If you have ever felt that way, or if you are feeling that way right now—take courage! Many of the spiritual giants of the Bible have, at times, felt that way. They, too, have experienced temporary despair, frustration and depression, even to the point that they wanted to die. But they were able to overcome those feelings, and so must we. There is a way! God's Way!

Most amazingly, it is man's *incredible* potential to become a member of the God Family—the Kingdom of God—destined to rule this earth, as well as the entire universe! That is THE reason God created man! Satan, who is still the present ruler over this world, is very angry at that thought. He will do everything he can to make sure that you will not be in God's Kingdom—that you will give up before you have reached your God-given destiny. He goes around like a roaring lion to see whom he can devour (1 Peter 5:8). And much of what Satan is broadcasting are feelings of despair, frustration, and hopelessness. Once we have lost our hope and vision for the future, Satan has won.

But take courage! Satan is not only attacking you! He has always been busy attacking the saints of God, using a variety of tactics,

and His direct intervention. It is ruled by Satan; actually, it is *held captive by Satan to do his will* (2 Timothy 2:26). It is an evil world (Galatians 1:4, *Authorized Version*). God has given man 6,000 years to rule himself, under Satan's invisible spiritual influence—and the end result of that human rule, under Satan's influence, is misery, pain, heartache, headache, war and despair (compare as an example of human misrule, 1 Samuel 8:9–20).

REAP WHAT YOU SOW

Since man wants to go his own way, *God does not force man* to accept Him and His protection. And so, in addition to events, which might happen because of “time and chance”—as God has left unrepentant man pretty much to himself and his own devices—*man reaps what he sows*. Since man lives in sin, following the lusts of his flesh, man reaps from his flesh, only destruction, suffering and pain (Galatians 6:7–8). Man is a free moral agent with the ability to choose—good as well as evil (Deuteronomy 30:19–20; Jeremiah 21:8; Acts 14:15–16).

When it comes to the people of this world who are cut off from the true knowledge of God and the right Way of Life, it is they who, perhaps unknowingly, create problems for themselves. As we read in Job 5:6–7, *New Jerusalem Bible*: “No, misery does not grow out of the soil, nor sorrow spring from the ground. **It is people who breed trouble for themselves** as surely as eagles fly to the height.”

God has called and chosen a few out of this world to live a life pleasing to Him. We once belonged to this world, but no longer. We are now in a different category. We are citizens of a better world, a heavenly kingdom. We are the begotten children of God. God is our Father, caring for and looking after us. He wants us to be in His Kingdom—to attain the first resurrection, which is a better resurrection. God is there when we face trials. He is not going to let time and chance rule over us.

What is our reaction when we find ourselves in trouble? Do we reason: It is because of time and chance? Or, do we say: Why did God let this happen? What is it that GOD wants me to learn from it?

What exactly is Solomon saying in Ecclesiastes 9:10–11?

Simply this: In Ecclesiastes 9:10 he encourages us to do with our

might what we ought to do. In other words, to be very careful how we live our lives as Christians. Give all glory to God, he says, and don't lean on your own understanding or strength. Because, he says in verse 11, when you fail, you'll be right back in the world, which you once belonged to, and in the world, you WILL be subject to time and chance. Your own human abilities won't necessarily help you in the world. Understand that **without God's help, we are pretty much lost, having become victims of time and chance.** Solomon says, you may even die in a terrible accident or because of a terrible sickness.

But, as long as we are in God's loving hands, we are not victims of time and chance. And when we die, it is NOT because of time and chance. Rather, when a Christian dies, it is because GOD has decided that it was time for him or her to die, as he or she has qualified for God's Kingdom (Numbers 23:10; Isaiah 57:1–2; Romans 14:8; Revelation 14:13).

INDIVIDUAL SUFFERING

We have already seen, and will discuss this aspect in much more detail later on, that **Satan's goal is to destroy true Christians.** He is willing to inflict enough physical and spiritual suffering on us, so as to make us forsake God. Such suffering, then, is not the result of "time and chance," but is brought upon us because of Satan's activities. So then we see that, even when it comes to individual suffering that Satan might inflict on us, **Satan can only do what God allows him to.**

Let us conclude this chapter with the following excerpts from our booklet, "*Angels, Demons and the Spirit World*," pages 49–50, discussing the suffering of righteous Job:

Satan and Job

... Satan appeared before God, telling Him that he had been "going to and fro on the earth," and that he had been "walking back and forth on it" (Job 1:7). Recall that God's angels go to and fro on the earth, to serve and to strengthen God's people. Satan and his demons walk back and forth on the earth, too, but their goal is to destroy God's people (compare 1 Peter

always, in His due time, provide us with the way of escape from trials and suffering (1 Corinthians 10:13). The Bible promises us that God delivers the righteous out of ALL of his afflictions (Psalm 34:19). This knowledge and conviction can only come through experience.

- d. We must go through suffering in order to learn what it is like to suffer.

Christ suffered to become a merciful High Priest for us. When we experience suffering, we can better understand the suffering, pain and misery that others may go through. Also, when we suffer, we can experience God's intervention, compassion and comfort, and we are to share God's comfort with those who suffer. That is, we are to comfort others with the same comfort that we received from God.

In 2 Corinthians 1:3–4, we read: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

Suffering produces in us empathy and compassion for others. When we suffer because of a sickness, we can feel for those who are sick. We can share in the grief of those who have lost a loved one, when we have had a similar experience. God wants people with a soft heart. We are not to harden our hearts, but to let God replace our hearts of stone with hearts of flesh. Jesus CRIED when He saw the suffering and pain around Him. He felt COMPASSION for the people who did not know where to turn for advice and help. He healed sick people, because He felt sorry and GRIEVED for them. He LAMENTED and WEPT for people, considering that their sin would cause them great pain and suffering.

As Christ's disciples, we must develop the same mind set which He has. And suffering will help us to do so.

Finally, when you are going through suffering, remember God's promise in Psalm 126:5: "Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy."

- Become patient (James 1:2–4);
- Become peaceful, so that we can also have a peaceful mind (Isaiah 38:17);
- Acquire a better heart (Ecclesiastes 7:3); and to
- Be strengthened in our faith (1 Peter 1:6–7).

We must go through suffering and fiery trials (Mark 9:49), as fire is to destroy everything that separates us from God.

Job, who endured much suffering, asked in Job 7:17–18: “What is man, that You should exalt him, That you should set Your heart on him, That You should visit him every morning, And test Him every moment?”

Paul gives the answer in 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.”

He continues to point out that nothing can separate us from the love of God, who predestined us to become His very sons and daughters. In verses 35–37, Paul explains: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

God allows or sometimes even brings upon us suffering so that we can:

- Become partakers of Christ’s holiness (Hebrews 12:10);
 - Inherit His eternal glory (2 Corinthians 4:17); and
 - Obtain His CROWN of life, which includes rulership over His creation (James 1:12).
- c. We must go through suffering and trials in order to draw closer to God—to learn how much we need God in our life.

Suffering motivates us to seek God and His help in prayer (Isaiah 26:16). This includes suffering because of sickness (James 5:13). Suffering and problems in life make us realize how much we are *dependent* on God (2 Corinthians 1:8–11). We will learn through the experience of suffering and God’s intervention, that God is aware of our trials, and that He is there to help us (Isaiah 43:1–2). We will experience that God will

5:8). Still, Satan can only do what God permits him to do. Satan told God that Job served God for ulterior motives. God allowed Satan to take away from Job all of his children and material possessions, but he was not permitted—at first—to “lay a hand on his person” (Job 1:8–12). We see that God set the limits of Satan’s actions. Satan the destroyer went out to destroy everything that Job had. Job’s reaction to this calamity is recorded in Job 1:21: “... The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away.” Job attributed his calamity to God, and he was not wrong in doing so, as the next verse tells us, “In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong” (Job 1:22).

Although Satan brought this disaster on Job, he did it with God’s express permission. It was not wrong for Job to say that God was ultimately responsible.

In Job 2:1–7, we are told that Satan obtained permission from God to bring terrible sickness upon Job, but he was not allowed to kill him. Again, we see that Satan must act within the limits given to him by God. Again, we are told that Job accepted this adversity from God, and that he did not sin in saying that it was God who had brought calamity upon Job (Job 2:10).

So then, why did God allow Satan to deal in this way with Job? Why didn’t God intervene and stop Satan? Why does God still allow Satan today to rule this world and continue to try to destroy God’s people?

According to James 5:11, God allowed this calamity to come upon Job *for a reason*—God wanted to show Job how merciful and compassionate He is. Job needed to see a very serious problem that he had, which, if he did not overcome, would have prevented him from entering the Kingdom of God. This problem was Job’s self-righteousness (compare, Job 32:1–2; 27:6; 40:8). Once God opened Job’s eyes to see himself, he confessed his guilt and repented (Job 42:1–6).

Job had to learn—and he did—that every human being sins (compare Romans 3:10; 1 Kings 8:46; 1 John 1:8–10; Ecclesiastes 7:15–20; 3:17–18). This included Job. In comparison with God, he was nothing, although he might have been “blameless” in comparison with other people. This does not mean that Job

never sinned. In fact, pride and self-righteousness are sins.

God allowed Satan to plague Job so that Job could see his own self-righteousness and his pride, so that he could overcome these sins and ultimately enter God's Kingdom. This shows God's great mercy and compassion for Job.

WE MUST BE WILLING TO SUFFER FOR GOD

Since God predicted that we would have to suffer for Him, we must be willing to do so. In fact, we are to rejoice when we suffer for Christ, as we are counted worthy by God to suffer for Him (Acts 5:41). Suffering for God is a special favor GRANTED to us (Philippians 1:29).

In order to follow God fully, we must also be willing to choose the right way and to make the right decisions, even if this results in suffering (Job 13:15; Hebrews 11:24–26). We are to be “patient IN tribulation” (Romans 12:12). If we faint in the day of adversity of suffering, our strength is small (Proverbs 24:10). God wants us to stay and grow strong, even in the face of adversity.

ADDITIONAL REASONS FOR CHRISTIAN SUFFERING

- a. We must go through suffering when we are in need of correction.

David sinned greatly and had to be corrected by God. David said that God was faithful in doing so, as He carried out His promise to afflict us when we sin, so that we are *motivated to cease from sinning* (Psalm 119:67, 71, 75; Lamentations 3:39–40; 1 Peter 4:1–2). Christ tells us that He rebukes and chastens us because He loves us (Revelation 3:19). He does so because He wants us to inherit eternal life in God's Kingdom.

God rebukes us when we have sinned against Him. When we go through suffering because we have sinned, we must not reject God's chastening—otherwise, things will only get worse. Proverbs 15:10 tells us: “Harsh discipline is for him who forsakes the way, And he who hates correction will die.”

- b. We must go through suffering in order to become perfect.

We all have to “experience” suffering (1 Peter 5:9). The Greek word, translated as “experience,” also has the meaning of “complete” or “end.” As Christ became perfect through suffering, so must we. Suffering in our lives is for the purpose of completing us or bringing us to the happy end of being able to enter God's kingdom.

Sufferings, or trials, assist us in becoming perfect, or complete, by helping us to:

- Become more and more humble (2 Corinthians 12:7–10);

AS CHRIST'S DISCIPLES, WE WILL SUFFER

First of all, let us understand that we WILL suffer, *IF* we are Christ's disciples. That is, we will become *partakers of His suffering* (1 Peter 4:12–13); we will suffer in the same way—including, perhaps, even a violent death—if we truly follow the example of our Lord and Master. We are to suffer *with Him* (Romans 8:16–17), “bearing His reproach” (Hebrews 13:13).

If we want to live righteously and godly—the same way that Christ lived—and if we really want to enter God's Kingdom, we WILL suffer (Acts 14:21–22; 2 Timothy 3:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:3–5).

This is partially the case because we are living in a world that is ruled by Satan, and Satan HATES us. Christ said to His true disciples: “In the world you will have tribulation” (John 16:33). He also prophesied that the world would hate us and persecute us, if we are His true disciples (John 15:18–20).

The history of God's true servants is one of suffering through persecution (Acts 7:52; Hebrews 10:32–34; 11:35–38; 1 Corinthians 4:11–13). We need to comprehend that persecution is a SIGN that we are pleasing to God (2 Thessalonians 1:3–7; Matthew 5:10).

As true Christians, we can expect, for instance, to be lied about (Matthew 5:11–12; Romans 3:8; 2 Corinthians 6:4, 8). In most cases, it is best not to respond to such false reports or accusations (Psalm 38:12–14; Proverbs 26:4; 1 Peter 2:21–23; 3:8–9).

At the same time, as we already saw in the case of Job, and as we will see more clearly in the following pages of this booklet, God would not allow Satan to tempt us, if it were not for our good. This might sound strange at first, but it is very true. When God allows Satan to tempt us, He gives us an opportunity to overcome and conquer Satan and thereby destroy the works of the devil. We can only do this, however, if we don't allow Satan to find a place in our lives (Ephesians 4:27), and if we submit to God. James 4:7–8 tells us: “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he *will* flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” In addition, we can only defeat Satan with God's help. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:11 to “Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

Even though Satan wants to destroy us, God gives us the opportunity to destroy his works and to defeat his influence in our lives.

Chapter 5—Products of a Selfish Society

If we are true Christians, God has called us to come out of this world—out of a society, no matter in what country we might be living, which is ruled and influenced by Satan the devil. God wants us to be different, but this requires time. It is a PROCESS. We all grew up in this world, and we ALL have embraced the same selfish way of thinking that most people do—a desire to please ourselves. **This selfish way of life backfires on us, producing pain and suffering—not only for ourselves, but also for others—instead of happiness and peace.**

Have you ever questioned HOW MUCH you have been influenced by Satan the devil, the god and ruler of this earth? Most people ignore Satan, rejecting the very thought that he exists or that he could in any way influence them. But even those who are aware of his existence and his evil devices, oftentimes will grossly underestimate him; in part, because they don't realize just *how much* Satan has influenced them throughout their entire lives!

SATAN'S SOCIETIES BUILT ON SELFISHNESS

When Satan rebelled against God, he believed he did not have to be obedient to God. He thought that he did not need God and that he could live without Him. And he didn't waste any time influencing Adam and Eve, and ultimately all of mankind, to think the same way. He told Eve, in effect: “There is no need to obey God. In fact, don't even believe God. God lied to you.” Eve bought what Satan was selling—a LIE. And man has bought the same lie ever since. Unfortunately, this led only to misery and pain, and war and bloodshed.

The human societies that were built following Adam and Eve's sin, were all built on this same lie—the concept that man does not need God to tell him how to live. Man has thus created selfish, nationalistic, egotistical societies, believing in selfish ambitions and war as a means of gain. And so, man has brought on himself the wars and the terrible atrocities with incalculable human suffering as a consequence. After all, James 4:1–2 says that human wars are the consequence of selfish

lusts, covetousness and desires for pleasure.

When Christ came as a human being to this earth, He brought with Him God's solutions to man's problems. But man did not accept Him or His message of hope at all. Man was motivated by his own selfish pursuits and did not want to give them up (John 11:46–48). At the beginning, many followed Christ, but only to an extent (John 6:60–66). Most of the people who followed Him, did so because He gave them food to eat; that is, He gratified their physical desires (John 6:26).

Even those of His disciples who continued to stay with Him did not fully realize their own selfishness and how big their egos were. When Christ was about to be crucified, and when He told them that all would forsake Him, they worried about who would be the greatest among them (Luke 22:14–24).

For instance, Peter, prior to his conversion, did not realize his own degree of selfishness. He thought that he would be able to die with Christ or to go to prison with Him. But when the hour of testing came, he failed miserably. Christ knew, of course, that this would happen, because He knew Peter, and He knew how Peter would act when being tempted by Satan (Luke 22:31–34).

Even after the resurrected Christ revealed Himself to Peter and some of the other disciples, Peter still showed signs of selfishness (John 21:15–22). When he was told that he would die for Christ, he asked Christ whether John would die, too. In other words, if Peter had to die, would this other disciple also have to die?

Even much later in his life, after God's Holy Spirit had been dwelling within Peter for quite some time, Peter was still struggling with overcoming the wrong influences of a society that had instilled a pattern of selfishness in him, from childhood (Galatians 2:11–21). God saw to it that this pattern of behavior would eventually be exposed so that it could be corrected. While in Antioch, Peter was afraid of offending the Jewish disciples who had come there from James, so Peter refused to eat with non-Jewish disciples. He was more concerned about his reputation with the Jews than he was with showing love and respect for the converted Gentiles from Antioch. And so, God used Paul to rebuke Peter openly, in front of others, because his hypocrisy had a negative impact on others.

at every given moment perfect, but rather, that his moral perfection ultimately depended upon his response to each challenge presented to him. This was especially true as this challenge intensified, as his cross drew nearer and became... a grim, present reality."

"*The New Bible Commentary: Revised*" adds the following thoughts: "Also by the experience of such a discipline, He, Son of God though He was, learnt the full meaning and cost of human obedience, and was thereby perfected in His human character, and in His fitness to be the cause to men of salvation eternal in quality. Men can enjoy the full benefit of his saving work only if they, too, are baptized into the same spirit, and become those who at any cost make active obedience to Christ their continual practice."

The *Nelson Study Bible* explains the fact that "Jesus learned obedience," in this way: "Jesus experienced all of what a person goes through on this earth. He knows how difficult it is to obey God completely, just as He understands the attractions of temptation ([Hebrews] 2:18). Yet He persisted in obedience, leading a sinless life (1 John 3:5)."

Notice, too, how other translations render Hebrews 5:8. *Moffat* says: "he learned by all he suffered how to obey." *William Beck* writes: "He found out from what He suffered what it means to obey."

One of the clearest interpretations of Hebrews 5:8–9 can be found in the rendering of the *Living Bible*, as follows: "And even though Jesus was God's Son, he had to learn from experience what it was like to obey, when obeying meant suffering. It was after he had proved himself perfect in this experience that Jesus became the giver of eternal salvation to all those who obey him."

WHY TRUE CHRISTIANS SUFFER

Jesus lived a perfect life without sin. Still, as a human being, He had to experience what it is like to live in this flesh, subject to temptations and sufferings, and stay obedient to God. He did, indeed, learn obedience by the things which He suffered. We must learn obedience in the same way.

But why, exactly, does God allow us to suffer? Is it really necessary that we **MUST** suffer? What are the reasons for Christian suffering?

Before Christ became a man, He had lived for all eternity as a glorified God being, in the Spirit, together with the Father (John 17:5). But when He became human, having laid aside His divine attributes (Philippians 2:5–7), He experienced for the first time what it was like to live with human nature—in this “sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3). He had to learn IN THE FLESH how to overcome sin and stay obedient to God; how to fight victoriously against the temptations of the flesh; and how to stay obedient in suffering, “to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8).

While in this sinful flesh, living with human nature, Christ learned obedience by condemning sin in His flesh (compare, again, Romans 8:3). He learned obedience to God’s Will, in the face of terrible sufferings and pain, by submitting His own Will to that of the Father, and by accepting and embracing the Father’s Will in His life (Matthew 26:38–39).

Christ never sinned. He was always obedient to God’s law. But as a human, He had to learn, by experience, how difficult it can be to always obey, and that sin can only be resisted successfully through the power of God’s Holy Spirit living within us. Christ emphasized many times that He could do nothing of Himself (John 5:19); that the Father dwelling in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, was doing the works which Christ performed (John 14:10); and that Christ was not seeking His own Will, but only the Will of the Father (John 5:30; 6:38). Although Christ never sinned, He still had to learn obedience to God’s law, as a human being, by the things, which He suffered.

We find this insightful explanation in the *NASB Study Bible* which sheds light on verse 8 of Hebrews 5: “Though He was the eternal Son of God, it was necessary for Him as the incarnate Son to learn obedience—not that He was ever disobedient, but that He was called on to obey to an extent He had never before experienced. The temptations He faced were real and the battle for victory was difficult, but where Adam failed..., Jesus resisted and prevailed.”

The *Broadman Bible Commentary* states, in regard to Hebrews 5:8–9: “This sonship did not immunize him from the necessity of learning as every genuinely human being must learn. The deepest lessons of life are learned through anguish. The learning of Jesus was not an exception to this. Being made perfect means, not that he was not

God was fully aware of this problem, and saw to it that Peter had ample opportunities to correct his behavior. That is why God required Peter to baptize the first Gentile convert, Cornelius. After Peter had done so, and after he had justified this act to the other disciples so that they understood that God had, indeed, opened the door of faith and repentance to the Gentiles, Peter certainly did not think that he would ever do what he later did in Antioch. He was still a product of the society in which he had grown up, and he still failed when the time of trial and temptation came. We all act at times as Peter did.

There are other examples that also show the negative effect that society has on people. In the Old Testament, when God freed ancient Israel from slavery and brought them out of Egypt, they essentially brought Egypt along with them. They brought along the society in which they had grown up (Acts 7:38–39), with the intent of even bringing it into the Promised Land.

In the New Testament, the scribes and Pharisees did not believe that they had killed the prophets of old. Technically, they had not; but Christ made it clear that they would have done so, if they had lived at that time, because they were products of the same kind of selfish society that existed when the ancient prophets were killed. In fact, Jesus made it clear that, because they were *exactly the same as their ancestors*, they would kill new prophets, and ultimately would kill THE Prophet—Jesus Christ (Matthew 23:29–36).

Before God called us, we were like a seed from a specific tree. This seed would grow up to become a tree similar to the one from which it came. Birds might pick up the seed and carry it miles away and drop it to the ground a long distance from the tree, but wherever the seed would take root, spring and grow up and develop, it would always produce the same kind of a tree. The seed could not say, “I don’t want to become that kind of a tree. I want to become a different kind of a tree.” The seed did not have that choice—the decision as to what kind of a tree it would become, had been made for it.

We, also, did not have any influence on who our parents were; where we were born; where we grew up; whether we were born male or female; or what race or ethnic group we were part of; i.e., Israelite or Gentile, American, British, Canadian, German, Italian or Chinese,

Chapter 6—Why Christians Must Suffer!

white or black or yellow. Certainly, with the spirit in man that God gave us, we could eventually make certain limited decisions, such as what college to go to, what occupation to select, what person to marry—but every single decision that we made, was made within the system of the society in which we grew up. No decision that we made, prior to our calling, would save us from eternal death, or separate us from Satan’s evil influences. And this means that we have caused much suffering, not only to other people, but also to our own selves. We have lived selfishly—ALL OF US—and **selfishness produces suffering and pain!**

Only when God calls a person out of the society in which they live, are they actually enabled to make a decision that would save them from eternal death and free them from Satan. Having been called, God gives that person an opportunity to *CHOOSE* His Way of Life, a way that had been closed to them before (compare Acts 26:17–18; Acts 22:12–16). When God offers them this choice, they still must choose. God does not do the choosing for us.

In this world, God’s Way is not a very popular way. It is a narrow and difficult road to travel. **It takes effort** to go God’s Way in a society that is going the opposite way—Satan’s way. His societal structures offer a plethora of ideas, concepts, and philosophies, and a wide spectrum of opinions and beliefs, but they all lead to suffering and pain, and ultimately, eternal death (Matthew 7:13–14).

We are called upon to continue to come out of the society in which we live, a society that is detrimental to God’s Way of Life. That is the only way to avoid unnecessary suffering.

REALIZE HOW MUCH SATAN’S SOCIETY INFLUENCES US

In order to be able to REALLY leave Satan’s world and to submit to God’s rule, we must realize how much this society forms our thinking, influences our actions, and makes us who we are, and how bad that influence really is.

When God revealed to Abraham that He was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham tried to persuade God not to do so, because he could not believe that it was really *that* bad. Abraham thought there surely must have been at least ten righteous people living in that area. Abraham, himself, had adopted some

This world experiences much pain and suffering, merely due to the fact that this is NOT God’s world. The popular song, “This is my Father’s world,” is simply not true. This is Satan’s world, and Satan hates those who have left his rule and have become subject to God and His Way of Life. Satan is after those to persecute them, and he will use human tools to make life miserable for them. However, as we have seen earlier, Satan can only do what God specifically allows him to do, especially when it comes to true Christians.

CHRIST SUFFERED!

It is no secret that true Christians suffer much in this life, perhaps more so than others. Jesus Christ, our great Savior and King, suffered terribly, even to death. His suffering was for a great purpose. We read that He became a merciful High Priest—One who understood our suffering and could intercede on our behalf—because He experienced suffering in the flesh. He suffered for us on the cross and in the days before, so that we can experience physical and spiritual healing, and reconciliation with God (Please read our free booklet, “*Sickness and Healing in the Bible.*”).

Also, Hebrews 5:8 tells us that Christ “learned obedience by the things which He suffered.” How, exactly, are we to understand this statement, and how does it apply to us today?

Jesus Christ, when He was here on earth as a human being, did, indeed, live a sinless life. He never sinned by breaking any of God’s Commandments (compare 1 John 3:4–5, *Authorized Version*). He kept all of God’s laws perfectly. He said in John 15:10: “I have kept My Father’s commandments.”

The Biblical record is conclusive that Christ never sinned. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Christ “was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” He was “separate from sinners” (Hebrews 7:26); and even when He suffered, He “committed no sin” (1 Peter 2:21–22). Christ challenged His listeners to convict Him of sin (John 8:46), knowing that they would be unable to do so. He also testified of Himself that “no unrighteousness” was in Him (John 7:18).

He sought to please others and avoid giving unnecessary offense (1 Corinthians 10:24, 31–33).

PLACE GOD FIRST IN YOUR LIFE

Most importantly, we can only overcome selfishness when we place God FIRST in our lives. When we think we don't need God, we will act selfishly, serving our own desires.

Matthew 6:24 tells us that we cannot serve God at the same time we serve anything or anyone else. We must ask ourselves: Who is our Lord? Is it our work, our family, our hobby, or our own created comforts—things that make us feel good? Christ mentions needs, which must be satisfied (verse 25), but Christ warns us not to make those needs the first priority in our lives (verse 33).

When we don't seek God's kingdom AND God's righteousness first in our lives, we will lose all the physical things for which we worked so hard. We *WILL* suffer! But when we seek God's kingdom and His righteousness first (Matthew 6:33), thereby denying our own selfish desires, we will be blessed with fulfillment of our needs, and *we can avoid unnecessary suffering*.

The account in 1 Kings 17:8–16 contains a moving example about a poor widow who placed God and His servant before her own needs. If, in that example, the widow had not placed God and His servant first in her life, she and her son would have died.

It is impossible to love God, if we don't love others. And in order to really love God and others, we must get rid of our selfishness. When we do so, God will bless us. Christ said: It is more blessed to GIVE than to receive! Man's way of life is focused on how much he can GET. And yes—he does get a lot with that kind of philosophy: a lot of pain, a lot of suffering, a lot of misery, sickness, war, bloodshed, environmental pollution, crooked politicians, and even deceitful ministers who look after themselves first. The list is written with blood and tears, and it is endless!

selfish concepts from the society he lived in, concepts which were detrimental to God's Way of Life. For instance, Abraham lied repeatedly about his wife, referring to her as his sister, because he was afraid for his life.

Lot, too, was a product of the society in which he lived. So was his wife who wanted to return to Sodom, and so were his daughters who later made Lot drunk to sleep with him and produce offspring through their own father. Lot adopted that society's way of thinking. That fact is especially evident when considering that he was willing to offer up his daughters to the perverts of Sodom in order to protect the strangers who had come into his house. That offer, whether serious or not, shows Lot's frame of mind at that time. He was, clearly, a product of the rotten, evil, abominable society of Sodom in which he lived.

We CANNOT overcome the society in which we grew up and which formed us, if we want to hold on and preserve what we were when God called us into His truth. The right approach for us is this: "I don't like what this society has made out of me, so I want to change what I have become." We must come to realize that everything we did before God called us was futile and non-productive, and we must acknowledge how much misery and pain it has created for us, as well as others associated with us. Even after our calling, we need to recognize that everything we do is useless if we are not staying on the straight and narrow pathway that God has designed for us.

God does not call us according to our works (2 Timothy 1:9). When God called us, we had not accomplished anything in our lives that would have compelled God to call us. Our works were part of this society in which we lived—they were evil. Even our "good" deeds were caused by selfish motives. God did not call us to *change* society, but rather to **come out of** society (Revelation 18:4) and to become a new creation—a new person (Ephesians 4:20–24; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

At the end of his life, Peter had no doubts or illusions about the society in which he lived and had grown up in (2 Peter 2:20–22). He encouraged us to GROW in Christ's knowledge about this world's systems and society, and to understand ourselves and the need to change, since we are a product of this society (2 Peter 3:18).

REALIZE WHO INFLUENCES SOCIETY

In order to overcome the selfishness of this society, and our own selfishness as a result of having grown up in this society, we must understand who really influences this society.

Even those Jews who believed in Christ and who actually believed His message, did not see that they were products of a society that came into being through Satan's influence, and that they were, in fact, following Satan's devices (John 8:30–45). With regard to those whom God has already called, all of us had the same desires as our father, the devil. We sinned because our own desires tempted us to sin; and these desires came from Satan the devil and the society in which we grew up (James 1:14).

We were following Satan and his society, fulfilling the selfish “desires of the flesh and of the mind” (Ephesians 2:1–3). We did not use God's Spirit to overcome those desires, because we did not have God's Spirit in us. Most likely, we did not even know that those desires were WRONG and UNGODLY, because they were commonplace in society. And even when God's Spirit began to work with us, how diligently and successfully did we actually use it? How consistently are we using it today? Of course, in order to use God's Spirit, we must know how we can receive the gift of God's Spirit. For vital information in this regard, please read our free booklet, *“Baptism—A Requirement for Salvation.”*

God gave His Spirit to King Saul to change him into another man (1 Samuel 10:6). But Saul did not let God change him; Saul was quite happy with his own ideas and concepts about life. Saul did not use God's Spirit within him to fight against the powers of darkness of this age—those wicked rulers in high places, as they are described in Ephesians 6:12. He did not fight against Satan's influences and try to overcome Satan's attitude in his life, and as a result, he lost God's Holy Spirit and was plagued by one of Satan's demons.

Saul never did overcome his selfishness. When he realized that God had chosen David to replace him as king, he tried to kill David, because he did not want to give up his kingdom. Ultimately, God just let King Saul die in battle, after he had turned to witchcraft and sorcery.

OVERCOMING SELFISHNESS

We can use our actions today as a kind of mirror to enable us to see how much we have changed our past selfish attitudes. Are we giving in to those selfish desires? Are we returning to what we came out of? Or have we not even left those selfish desires behind? For example, Gentile Christians wanted to return to pagan holidays and philosophies (Compare Galatians 4:3, 8–11; for a thorough explanation of this passage, please read our free booklet, *“God's Commanded Holy Days”*). How much pain and suffering has been caused, throughout history, through those misguided endeavors!

LOOK OUT FOR THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF OTHERS

In order to overcome the selfishness we learned from this society and to become a new creation, we have to look out for the needs and interests of others.

It really boils down to a question of selfishness versus selflessness (Philippians 2:3–11; Romans 15:1–3). If we constantly seek the best for ourselves, then what we look for will be taken away from us. The one who acts humbly and with the interest of others in mind, will be exalted in due time (Luke 14:7–11), by God Himself.

Genesis 13:8–13 records a strife between the servants of Abraham and Lot, and how Abraham, **selflessly**, solved that problem. He gave Lot the opportunity to choose what land he wanted for himself and his flock, in order to avoid further strife. Abraham was content with what Lot would leave him. Lot, however, acted **selfishly**, by choosing the best land for himself. It wasn't Lot's prerogative to select the best land for himself, as God had promised that to Abraham; but Lot selfishly chose the best for himself and Abraham let him have it, in humility. In the long run, though, Abraham increased in riches, while Lot, residing in Sodom, later lost everything that he had gained by selfish means, when Sodom was destroyed.

Paul tried to walk in the shoes of his fellow man, trying to understand what caused a person to be weak (2 Corinthians 11:29). He became indignant when others were accused or maligned. He had the best interest of others in mind.

Paul was careful not to act selfishly, but to look out for others.