

## WHY DO BELIEVERS SUFFER?

*1 Chronicles 29:10-13—And David blessed Jehovah in the sight of all the congregation; and David said, Blessed be thou, Jehovah, the God of our father Israel, for ever and ever. Thine, Jehovah, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the splendor, and the majesty; for all that is the heavens and on the earth is thine: thine, Jehovah, is the kingdom, and thou art exalted as Head above all; and riches and glory are of thee, and thou rulest over everything; and in thy hand is power and might; and in thy hand it is to make all great and strong. And now, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.*

*Psalm 89:14—Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of thy throne; loving-kindness and truth go before thy face.*

*Job 42:5-6—I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: Wherefore I abhor [myself], and repent in dust and ashes.*

May we have a word of prayer:

*Dear Lord, as we have gathered here in this place we bow in worship, knowing that Thou art on the throne. Thou art in charge of everything—even our hairs have been numbered. We thank Thee for Thy tremendous love towards us. We thank Thee for Thy noble thought about us. We thank Thee for all Thy sufficient supply that Thou hast provided for us. In spite of all our weaknesses we thank Thee that Thou art sufficient, and Thy power is manifested in our weakness so that Thy will may be done in every one of us. We give Thee thanks; in Thy precious name. Amen.*

### The Secret of Christian Living

We are living in the most exciting time because we are living on the verge of a great change. We know that the age of grace is coming to an end and the age of the kingdom is coming in. And I really feel that we are at that juncture. This is the reason that living in this world is getting more and more difficult. When we were young, we never encountered the things that the young people are facing today, but it is because of the time. Therefore, as we are living at this juncture, how can we be faithful to the Lord? If it depends upon ourselves we will not be able to overcome, but thank God one thing never changes—God's throne is set in heaven. He is in charge of everything. So it is time for us to look away from ourselves, to look away from everything around us and look up to God on the throne. This is the secret of Christian living. So may the Lord open our inner eyes and see this one thing: God sits upon His throne. He is in control and He knows everything about us. He is there to train us, to discipline us and to enable us to grow in stature that we may be fit for our Lord Jesus Christ. So I always feel this is not only a most exciting time, it is also a very important as well as a most dangerous time.

### David's Heart for the Building of the House of God

We would like to consider what it means that "God is on the throne." We know when David was preparing for the temple of God, he was not allowed to build it because he had shed

too much blood; nevertheless God allowed Solomon, his son, to build it. But in spite of the fact that David was not allowed to build it, God did give him the pattern for the temple because of his love for the Lord. And through many afflictions he gathered the materials for the building of the house. However, it was not only in his afflictions, but the Bible says that in his affection for the Lord, out of his own property he prepared materials for the building of the house. He showed his son Solomon the pattern of the temple and encouraged everybody to offer freely for the work. The people did offer freely unto the Lord, and David was filled with thanksgiving and he blessed the Lord.

So in I Chronicles 29 we find David full of praise: "Blessed be thou, Jehovah, the God of our father Israel, for ever and ever. Thine, Jehovah, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the splendor, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is thine: thine, Jehovah, is the kingdom, and thou art exalted as Head above all; and riches and glory are of thee, and thou rulest over everything; and in thy hand is power and might and in thy hand it is to make all great and strong. And now our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name."

We know that God is on the throne. He has the authority, the rule, the riches, the glory, and He has the power and might to make us great. This is what "God on the throne" means.

### **Lucifer's Attempt to Seize the Throne**

Before God restored the heavens and the earth (see Genesis 1) we know that in the former earth man had not yet been created. The highest creation was the angels, and among them was one full of beauty and glory whom God set as an attendant upon His throne (see Ezekiel 28). That angel was Lucifer, the brilliant star. He was not only gifted with many gifts, he was also the anointed cherubim who led the angels in worship and praise around the throne. In other words, God delegated great authority to that archangel. In the beginning he was perfect before God, but gradually, because of his power and gifts, he began to turn inward to himself. He wanted to be equal with God and take the place of God's only begotten Son; and because of this, God discharged him. God may delegate His authority to others, but He never gives them His authority. He is the One who is on the throne.

Now it would have been very easy for God to destroy Lucifer, Satan. By His breath He could have destroyed him immediately, but that would have brought no glory to God. It would be like a big man striking a little child. So God has His own plan. He wanted somebody lower than the angels to be used by Him to destroy the angel that is higher than man. And that is the reason why we are here.

### **The Creation of Man in God's Image**

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, but the earth became void. In other words, there was a catastrophe on the earth before God restored it. Lucifer rebelled against God and He destroyed the earth. Evidently, at that time the earth was given to Satan to rule for God; therefore, when he rebelled against God, whatever was under his authority fell into ruin and the earth was covered with water. But praise God, He never fails! Whatever He determines in His heart He always accomplishes. We do not know how long this situation continued, but in His love the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the water and in six days He restored the earth to be habitable, and on the sixth day He created man.

Man was created in a very special way; God had never done anything like this before. By His power He created the heavens and the earth and all the things that are in the earth, but He

had never created anything in His own image according to His likeness. However, when He began to create man, He said, "I will build him according to My image and My form." In other words, we are created in such a way that we are able to receive God Himself into us because we have the same image which speaks of inner character, and because of that same character God can use us to defeat His enemy. Man is created with a mission. Our mission is to be used by God to destroy His enemy and to bring all things under the feet of His beloved Son.

### **The Trees in the Garden of Eden**

We know the story of how God put man in the garden of Eden which means "pleasure." God created the trees to provide food for man's body. In the midst of the garden God planted the tree of Life which was a tree that could give man the life of God. It is an indication that God wanted us to receive His life and only with His life are we able to accomplish what God has ordained for us. However, next to that tree God planted another tree; it was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Sometimes we feel this was a very bad tree, but how can God plant a bad tree in the garden of Eden? As a matter of fact, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is a better tree; it is just not the best. The best tree is the tree of life but second to that is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This tells us that God had made every provision for man. He provided for man's body through all the fruits of the different trees. He made provision for the soul of man through the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And He made provision for our spirit by giving us the tree of Life so that His own life can become the life of our spirit. However, God warned man: "Every tree in the garden you can freely eat," and that of course included the tree of Life. How anxious God was to see man choose the tree of Life! But God told Adam that he could not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because on the day that he ate thereof he would surely die. Why did God want to keep Adam from eating from this tree?

There is no knowledge in the world that is higher than the knowledge of good and evil. Scientific knowledge cannot be compared with moral knowledge. Ethics is the highest knowledge the world has ever known. However, the problem is if you have the knowledge and you do not have the life, if you know what is good and what is bad, but you do not have the power to do the good and resist the evil, what will be the result? Of course, it will be death; therefore, God wanted man to eat of the tree of Life. If we are united with God we will depend upon His life so that we may live according to His will; but unfortunately, man was deceived. If we are united with God we will depend upon His life so that we will live according to His will; but unfortunately, man was deceived.

### **The Result of Adam's Disobedience**

When God put Adam in the garden of Eden, He gave him a commission. He said, "You are to till and to guard the garden," because it had no wall around it, and Satan was outside the garden. He tried to get in in order to tempt man; so God gave man the commission: "You have to guard the garden. You are the wall of the garden so that the enemy will not be able to enter in and destroy it." But unfortunately, man failed to guard the garden. So Satan slipped in and persuaded Eve to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan tempted man by saying, "You can be God; you do not need to depend upon Him. If you eat the fruit of the forbidden tree, God will be jealous of you because He does not want you to be equal with Him.

For if you eat this fruit you will know as God knows and you will not need God anymore; you will be God.” What a temptation! Man failed under that temptation, and because of this the Bible says, “On the day that you eat the forbidden fruit you shall surely die.” Of course, we know that physically speaking Adam and Eve lived on for hundreds and hundreds of years. Not only that, they begot sons and daughters. In other words, their body was living and their soul was living, but according to what God had said: “On the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die,” man’s spirit died. Many human beings seem to forget that we have a spirit as well as a soul and a body.

When I was young, we had a foreign grandmother in our family. She was a missionary to China and was the one who led my father to the Lord. After she retired she did not want to go back to the states, so she lived with us. We called her “grandma,” and whenever she was exasperated she always said, “Oh, my soul and body,” as if she had no spirit. And that is the situation with the people in the world today; they only have a body and a soul, and the highest living they can achieve is to try and live by ethics. There is no spirit as an organ which simply means it has lost its source. Scientifically speaking, death is the cessation of a relationship with its proper environment. For instance, when our body dies, it has lost its contact with its proper environment. It cannot see or hear or touch anymore. The person who dies has lost contact with his proper environment. That is the death of the body.

### **The Spirit Lost Its Proper Function**

What is the death of the spirit? It does not mean the spirit does not exist anymore; it is still there, but it has lost its proper environment. It cannot make contact with God. Before we were saved, we may have prayed, but our prayer only hit the ceiling. It could not contact God. Man today still has a spirit but that spirit has lost its proper function. It has only an improper function which can still contact evil spirits. This shows that our spirit is still there but it has lost its proper environment which is the situation of man today. But God did not give up. When God purposes something, no matter what happens He will eventually accomplish what He has purposed. So God began to work. And thank God we all know the gospel—that He sent His only begotten Son into this world to be made a man, just as we are, and through that Man God accomplished all that He has ordained for man and is able to bring many sons to glory.

### **God’s Permissive Will**

There is one thing we know for sure—God may delegate authority but He never gives up His authority. He is in charge of all things. He takes care of those who belong to Him; so there is nothing that can happen to us without His permission. We know whatever happens to us, if it is not the direct will of God, it is His permissive will. In other words, sometimes He leads us directly by His will. He shows us what His will is and leads us in that way. But at other times He may lead us in a permissive way; the reason for this is there is something more that we need to learn, or there is something within us that is not totally in agreement with Him. So whatever God’s direct will or His permissive will may be for us, at the back of it we find that God is on the throne.

Whenever He allows His permissive will to come into our lives, it is not something that God wants to do to us. However, He knows there is something in us that we need to learn, so He permits His enemy or our environment to come to us in such a way that we may learn what

needs to be learned or remove whatever needs to be removed from our life. But whenever it is His permissive will one thing is sure: He will never permit anything to happen to us beyond our ability. He will deposit Himself in us to such a degree that He knows what this permissive will should do in our lives and we will have that inner strength to overcome it. If we do not it is because we do not depend upon Him and we try to face our situation by ourselves. The Bible tells us that God never tempts us. He may test us but He will never tempt us as we read in the book of James: "Temptation comes from the enemy or from our own lust." God only tests us but never tempts us. When He tests us, He has already deposited Himself in us to such a degree that He knows we are able to overcome.

### **The Secret of Living**

So what is the secret of living while we are living in these last days? The secret of living is seeing God on the throne. Whenever our eyes turn to ourselves or to our environment, we will fail. But whenever we set our eyes upon God on the throne, if we can see His throne there, we will overcome. So that is the secret we find in the Word of God.

### **Job, the Man from the Land of Uz**

Now I would like to use an extreme case from the book of Job to illustrate how this works. As a matter of fact, chronologically speaking, this is the first book in the Bible and was written before the five books of Moses. The Bible says there was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, but he was not a Jew. We will remember that God said, "Jacob I love, but Esau I hate" (see Romans 9:13). Yet this man Job was the son of Esau because in Lamentations 4:21 it says, "The sons of Saul live in the land of Uz." So this man was a descendant of Esau which shows that God has no partiality. The reason He loved Jacob and hated Esau is not because He was partial but because He knew exactly what was in Esau and Jacob. I believe when we read the Bible, probably you will agree with me that Esau was a better man. He was straight forward but Jacob was tricky, yet God loved Jacob and hated Esau because Jacob had a heart for God's blessing. Esau despised the blessing; but thank God that He is not partial in any way.

I remember when I was young and my foreign grandmother was living with us. My father had seven children but my foreign grandmother really loved my youngest brother, so we tried to stir her up and said, "You are partial." When we did that, she was so exasperated that she said, "I love you all just the same, but the reason it seems I love your brother more is because he is closer to me." Is that not the Spirit of our God? He loves us all but sometimes we feel God loves brother so and so or sister so and so more than me. I think we have all had that kind of feeling. However, it is because they are closer to Him and not because He is partial.

Job was a descendant of Esau but he was perfect, upright, feared God and abstained from evil. It is quite a description. He was perfect, but of course, this is not perfection. Nevertheless, compared with the other people he was truly perfect in his heart because he feared God and abstained from all evil. He was an upright person and because of this God blessed him. This man became very great, but in spite of his greatness he was still pious before God. He had seven sons and three daughters and they were a very humble family because when the sons had their festival, they always invited their sisters to be with them. And Job was such a pious person it made him afraid that when his children had a good time they might sin against God;

so after they finished the festival Job would offer sacrifices for them. I think even today it is very hard to find a righteous person like that.

### **The Unseen World**

Then there was the unseen world and it was there that God was taking notice of His servant; but Satan was also watching. One day, when God was on His throne, all His angels came before Him and even Satan was there. And God did something most unusual; He challenged Satan with Job

I often feel I am not qualified to be used as a challenge of God to Satan. But Job feared God in such a way and he was such a perfect person that God was able to challenge Satan with him. God said: "Satan, where have you been?" Brothers and sisters, do not think that Satan is asleep. He is very, very busy. He is going here and there, up and down, watching for opportunities to attack God's people in order to attack God. He cannot touch God in any way; all he can do is touch God's people as an attack against God.

### **Satan Targeted Job**

God said, "Have you noticed my servant Job?" Now, of course, Job was Satan's target. God said, "Have you seen a man like Job? He is perfect and righteous; he fears God and abstains from evil." And Satan began to attack. Satan said, "Does Job love you without a reason? It is because You have blessed him. If You take away his blessing see if he still fears You."

How God's people today live for blessings. We love blessings. There is a book called "The Blessings of God". It tells us that we do not need to bother to search the Scriptures because we can just open the book and it will tell us what promise God has given us for the day. That is what we like. That is the difference between those who really love the Lord and those who love blessings, and Satan knows it.

Satan said, "If You take away his blessings Job will curse You to Your face." But God knew what He had done in Job's life, and He was going to allow His permissive will to work in him. There is enough reserve in him that can stand that accusation. On the other hand, God allowed Satan to tempt Job because He also knew there was something in Job that was not pure, that was not wholly of God. There was a fear in him that one day God would punish him. His understanding of God was not complete and God wanted to use that opportunity to deal with His servant. God even makes use of His enemy to fulfill what He wants to complete in His servant.

### **Satan Can Do Nothing Without God's Permission**

So whatever may happen to you, remember that God is on the throne. Satan can do nothing to you without God's permission. And when God does permit a situation in our lives, there is a purpose behind it. On the one hand, He knows He has deposited enough of Himself in us that we will be able to overcome it. On the other hand, He wants to bring out that which is incomplete in us and deliver us and mature us.

So God said, "All right, you go ahead and do it." And Satan had no mercy. In one day he took away everything from Job. Not only was his property gone, all his children were gone; yet Job bowed his head and worshiped. Thank God. But Satan had not finished. Another day Satan

and the angels again appeared before God's throne and God said to Satan: "Have you noticed My servant Job? In spite of all that you have done he did not depart from Me." And Satan showed how cruel he can be when he said: "You may take everything away from him, and he will still love You; but if You touch his life then he will curse You." And the challenge was to the uttermost. That is Satan. He always tries to do his work to the extreme degree. But God knew there was enough of Himself in Job to withstand the attack. So God said, "You may touch his body, but preserve his life." And Satan went out and touched his whole body with boils and he sat among the ashes scratching himself. Satan even used his wife to say, "Curse God and die." But praise God—God gives and God takes away. Blessed be the Lord.

### **Job's Three Friends**

Then we find three of Job's friends who came to visit him, and they were people who feared God. When they saw what happened to Job, they really felt for him. So they sat with him seven days and nights without saying a word. Then the Bible tells us that Satan's attack on Job seemed to fail because Satan disappeared, but the sympathy of his friends broke Job down. And then we have the conversations between Job and the three friends. I often feel that probably this is what happened in the soul of Job. When Job was going through all these problems, we hear the voice of his soul expressed through his three friends.

### **The Voice of the Soul**

In our soul we have three functions—feeling, mind, and will. So I believe these three friends represent the voice of his soul or the best of his soul. Sometimes we think that the bad side of our flesh needs to be resisted but the good side of our soul needs to be kept. However, the Bible says there is nothing good in me, that is in my flesh. Even the best of our soul does not know the mind of God. So these three friends represent the best of the soul—how one feels, thinks, sees, and what the soul will say.

The first friend that speaks to Job is Eliphaz who represents feeling, the best of our soul. He is very mystical. Our feeling is really mystical and out of that mystical feeling he said, "It must be that Job has sinned. Otherwise, how could he suffer in such a way?"

The second friend Bildad represents the mind of the soul, the best of the mind. You find in his speech he refers to tradition according to the mind of the ages. God will only punish the evil and be good to the good.

The third person Zophar represents the will. He is very dogmatic and he said, "You must have sinned. Otherwise, it would not have happened this way. So you find the voice of the soul telling him that he must have sinned. And yet Job felt in himself a hesitancy because he had not sinned. He did not really know what to do.

Finally, there is the young man Elihu who represents the spirit of man. The spirit of Job began to see some light. He began to see the discipline of the Lord and then God appeared to him. The strangest thing is that when Job was in that situation, all he was asking of God was to give him an explanation. He just could not understand what had happened. On the one hand, he trusted in the Lord; on the other hand, he did not know why this had happened to him. And because of this he murmured. He misunderstood God and thought God was being hard on him, so he cried out to Him for a chance to explain. Finally, God appeared to him, but it was very strange. When God spoke to him, He did not give Job an explanation. On the contrary, God only

demonstrated His authority and His power. In other words, God is God. He knows what He is doing. He can do anything He wants and it is for the good of His own. In other words, God appeared to Job that He is on the throne.

If we look at our environment, we will fail. If we look at ourselves we will be puzzled. We do not know why such things happen, but if we get a vision of God on the throne that He is in charge and He knows exactly what He is doing, even if it is His permissive will, His thought is good. He wants to purify us, deliver us from our own thinking that we may completely yield to Him and enable Him to take away anything that comes from ourselves—our righteousness, our success, our efforts that we may truly acknowledge we are nothing and He is everything to us.

When Job was shown God on the throne, that He is the authority, and whatever He does He has the right to do it and is doing it for our good, Job bowed down and said, “I heard of You in the past, but now I see You, so I repent in dust and ashes. Then God began to turn the curse into blessing.

What is the lesson we learn from the book of Job? It is sonship because afterwards God gave him double and that is sonship. So that is God’s thought concerning us. As we pass through various trials and temptations, and we are wondering why and why, let us lift up our head and see God on the throne. He *cannot* be wrong. He has a reason for whatever happens in our lives, and there is a lesson He wants to teach us. There is still much in us that needs to be dealt with and it is through discipline that we will grow into sonship. I think it is very clear from the Scripture that as we are walking in this life the secret is to see God on the throne. The earlier we yield ourselves to Him the better. Do not resist the discipline of the Lord. So may the Lord help us.

Let us pray:

*Dear Lord, Thy ways are higher than our ways; Thy thoughts are higher than our thoughts. Teach us how to yield ourselves to Thee, knowing that Thou art on the throne. Thou knowest what Thou art doing and Thou art supporting and supplying us so that we may look off unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith. We give ourselves to Thee today. Lead us on until Thy purpose is fulfilled. We give Thee all the glory. In Thy precious name. Amen.*