

When Bad Things Happen to God's People

A Meditation on 1 Peter 1:3-12.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28, KJV

Have you ever heard anyone declare, "Life stinks!"? The Scripture says life is "**perishable**" (1 Corinthians 15:42, NASB). Perishable things spoil and in spoiling, can stink, the smell of rotted chicken or cauliflower being proof to the point. Even for Christians, life can become messy. Because sometimes we desire to use God rather than worship Him, we tend to doubt Him when life begins to spoil. *Why me, God?* This becomes the question many ask when they unexpectedly crash into the wall of hard times.

The Christian-Jews of the *Diaspora*, those sons of Abraham whom the Lord had expelled from the land of Israel for bad behavior, sought relief for their punishment and found it in the Messiah, or so they thought. For reason of trusting in Him, they believed God would pour out His blessing upon them as stipulated in the Torah's *Blessing and Cursing* formula (See Deuteronomy 28:1-5, "**blessing**"; 28:15-19, "**cursing**"). Simply put, the Lord promised to bless Israel if they obeyed Him, but inflict misery upon them if they did not. Now that these dispersed Jews thought they were on God's right side through faith in Messiah Jesus, they expected that life would go well for them.

Imagine the "heaviness" of heart they experienced when, after coming to Christ, their lives did not get better for believing in Jesus Christ, but grew worse, became more complicated and miserable. For naming the name of Jesus, society persecuted them. Jewish converts lost their reputations and businesses. Sometimes their families disowned and disinherited them. Society hated and persecuted them (See John 15:18-19.). F.B. Meyer wrote: "The new convert became the target for every weapon, hurled from any quarter." Hey—they thought—if I'm on God's right side, why is this wrong stuff happening to me?

But the Lord never promised the trip to heaven would be like a luxury ride on a Boeing 747. Health and wealth preachers tell us that God wants all of His children to experience the good life "now." However, there is one glaring fault with this prosperity gospel (Which incidentally, is not the Gospel, but "**another gospel**." See Galatians 1:6-10.). The prosperity gospel is not true to Scripture.

To cope with tribulation, we must remember that trials last only for awhile. It's a matter of time (Revelation 2:10). Amidst the fires of life, *The idea is to set the timer of one's temper for a long run. Think long. Focus on the final lap of the race. Have a long fuse. Look ahead to the Lord's coming.* When life turns for the worse, we ought to see ourselves running the final stretch of the race of life, and accordingly, fix our eyes upon the Lord's coming. In Him we have a "**living hope**" (1 Peter 1:3). With that positive affirmation, the present, no matter how stressed, becomes meaningful. In such a frame of heart and mind, believers can endure situations that

they did not choose for themselves, but fell upon them them (Romans 8:28).

Thus, Peter wrote to exiled Jewish Christians telling them, "**In this you greatly rejoice . . . [though] you have been distressed by various trials**" (1 Peter 1:1, 6). Peter called their stress mess a trial "**by fire.**" If passed, these tests would prove their *spiritual metal* and "**result in [their] praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ**" (1 Peter 1:7).

Yet without Christ, hope is dead, and suffering has no real or final purpose in life, Christian or otherwise. But if we suffer faithfully, and keep our minds and hearts on the finish line, all the while knowing that without Christ life is perishable forever, Scripture tells us that we have "**an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time**" (1 Peter 1:4-5). Meanwhile, we wait expectantly for that day when, "**this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality**" (1 Corinthians 15:54, NASB). We must remember that glory awaits us just beyond the sunset of life's little day (1 Peter 1:11).