

Considering Our Ways

There is a lot of suffering in the world these days, isn't there? Sometimes it just breaks your heart. There are some people who must wonder why everything seems to go so wrong in their life. And I know that the pain is real and sometimes severe.

Sometimes when people suffer so much, in their cry to express their pain, there may be a temptation to blame God or, at least, to question why we should have to suffer so. In Lamentations 3:1-22, Jeremiah felt like he was a special target for God's afflictions on His people, but even so he refused to give up his trust in Jehovah.

A few verses later in that same chapter, the weeping prophet makes a statement that all of us would do well to consider: *Why should any living mortal, or any man, offer complaint in view of his sins? Let us examine and probe our ways, and let us return to the Lord* (Lamentations 3:39, 40). We really do not have any cause for complaint. I don't mean that we should just grin and bear it when we suffer such terrible afflictions. We should cry out to God and we can take great comfort in the fact that He has promised to hear our cry and deliver us. However, we must stop short of blaming God for the things we suffer.

We suffer in this life simply because we are still in this life and not in heaven where there will be no more tears (Revelation 21:4). As long as we remain here there will be pain. What we need to concentrate on is returning to the Lord.

In Lamentation 3, for several verses Jeremiah continues his "lament" that he suffers at the hand of God and as a result of his own sins, but a subtle shift takes place along about verse 50. There is no hope until ...*the Lord looks down and sees from heaven*. From there Jeremiah describes the deliverance by the hand of God. When Jeremiah returned to the Lord and cried out "*from the lowest pit*" (verse 55), God heard and said, "*Do not fear!*" (verse 57). Verse 58 says, "*O Lord, You have pleaded my soul's cause; You have redeemed my life.*"

The point of this note is not that you deserve what you get in this life. It is not to say that God is just paying us back what we have earned. Nor do we mean to say that all you have to do is cry out to the Lord and there will be no more pain in this life. What this passage of Scripture, these "lamentations" of the prophet Jeremiah, seems to be saying is that if we concentrate on what is most important (returning to the Lord), we can look forward to salvation in the end. And that is only because God loves us enough to make this possible.

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