

THREE INTERESTING QUESTIONS

Job 4:1-8

Have you ever observed how Eliphaz, along with the other friends of Job, tried to comfort Job in his sorrow? Or, were they trying to comfort him? They were called friends of Job, but if someone should come to visit you in the hospital and find you in a very serious condition, and should stand by your bed and tell you he was not surprised to find you in such a condition, since he had been expecting that you would one day pay for your sin, would you find it difficult to believe him a real friend? Eliphaz said, in effect, "Job, you have prayed for a lot of people. You have strengthened the hands of others, but now it has come upon you and you can't take it. Whoever heard of an innocent man being punished?"

Maybe those friends were about as comforting to Job as some of us have been when we have visited the sick. Have you ever gone by to see a sick person and before leaving said, "Well, I must go, as I am on my way to a funeral?" Funeral is not a very appropriate subject to talk about when visiting one who is seriously ill. Have you visited one who has been in a car wreck and sat there and told the patient all about a wreck you had which nearly killed you? Or, have you asked the suffering patient to tell you all about how it happened? A neighbor woman went to visit a lady who was very ill. The sick lady asked the visitor to do her a favor. She said, "I wish you would get some paper and a pencil and write my sister. She has not heard from me for several days. Just tell her what you know about my condition." The visiting lady had written a couple of pages and then asked the sick woman, "How do you spell casket?" Don't you imagine that was a lot of comfort to that woman?

Dr. M. E. Ramay of Edmond, Oklahoma, told about Mrs. Ramay, a deacon and his wife, and himself returning from a meeting one afternoon. As their car was going down a hill, a car was coming behind them and they were meeting another. The car behind them did not have a horn or any brakes. The driver had to go around them and have a head-on crash with the car they were meeting or he had to plunge into the Ramay car. He chose the latter and, as a result, Mrs. Ramay was confined to her bed for some five or six weeks. One day a lady went to visit her. She sat in a rocking chair by the bed and rocked for about two hours. That was terrible for one who was suffering. When she got up to leave she said, in such comforting tones, "Well, I hope you get along all right, but I have always heard that if a person ever got a hard lick on the head, they never would be right anymore." That was comfort for you! But, Dr. Ramay said, "After all, it served a purpose. When my wife gets a little out of control, I say, 'I guess you remember what Mrs. ___ told you.'" That is just about the kind of comforting Job got from these friends of his.

There are three questions I want to ask and let the Word of God give the answer:

I. Do Sinners Prosper In This Life?

Many things are mysterious, and trouble the minds of people. Did you ever hear someone make a remark something like this? "I don't understand it. If there ever were a good man, I know this man is one of the best and it seems that he has more trouble than anybody." Or, "I just don't get it. Mr. ___ is one of the most ungodly men I have known. He never goes to church. He doesn't pretend to be a Christian. He never does anything for the work of the Lord, and it seems that everything he touches turns to money." If you have had such thoughts, don't think it strange. You are not the first person to have such questions come to mind. Jeremiah said: "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with

thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?" (Jeremiah 12:1).

Is the fact that one has health and is gaining wealth an evidence that he or she is a God-pleasing person? Not by any means. David said: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evil doers shall be cut off: but those who wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth" (Psalm 37:7-9).

Through the centuries many have wondered why the wicked sometimes prosper. I wonder if it could be true that the more of God's blessings they have and use on themselves in this life, the greater will be the fall when it comes?

Does God ever punish sinners in this life? Yes, God may have something He wants to bring to pass and the best way to get it done is to punish some sinner -- someone who is not a child of His. It may be that the best way by which He can get a blessing to a child in the home is to punish the sinful father or mother. It may be that the best method He can use to bring a blessing to husband or wife is to punish the other. We may be assured of one thing as to the prosperity of the wicked, and that is, this world is the only place in which the wicked will ever experience prosperity.

II. Does God Chastise His Disobedient Children?

"Punishment" is usually considered a stronger word than "chastisement." Punishment may not always be for the good of the individual being punished. The state executes a man for the vindication of the law and for the good of society. It certainly does not execute the man in order to make a better person out of him. Chastisement is more often thought of as that which is given for the special benefit of the one who is chastised. Divine chastisement is always for the good of God's child. It should be some comfort to us to know that when we are being chastised by our Heavenly Father, it is always for our good. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." Yes, God chastises His children in this life. The clearest statement in the Word of God on this subject is found in Hebrews 12: 5-11: "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

God will chastise His children for disobedience in this life. How does He do it? He does it in His own way. He does not consult us as to when or how it

shall be done.

1. God may take something away from His disobedient child.

He may take health. He may take position or job and permit him to suffer financial reverses. Not all sickness, loss of health, or financial reverses come as a result of the chastening of God, but many of them do. Church members live disobedient lives, get in hospital, acknowledge not been living as children of God should live, and ask to pray that God will give health and strength back to body and promise that, if He does, will be true to Him the rest of life. Few have kept promise, but many have not.

The only ground on which have a right to ask God to restore bodily health and strength to any child of His is upon the condition that restored health and strength to be used in the service of Him Who gives it. Why ask God to give back strength of body to be used in the service of Satan?

2. God may shorten the days of His disobedient child.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses that self-same day, saying, Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people: Because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel" (Deuteronomy 32:48-51).

Moses did not become a lost man by his act of disobedience. "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him" (Matthew 17:1-3).

3. God may remove a child from the home because of the disobedience of the parent.

God has done that, and He may do it again. "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. And Nathan departed unto his house. And the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead?" (II Samuel 12:13-18). Not all children are taken because of the sins of parents, but some are.

III. Will The Works Of God's Children Be Rewarded In The Life To Come?

Some have remarked, "Just so I barely get into heaven, I'll be satisfied." But that is not the attitude of the true Christian. One who does not want to work for Christ need not expect to go to heaven.

Keep in mind that there is a difference between salvation and rewards. Salvation is a free gift of God. Reward is that which one receives in return for services rendered.

No one merits or earns salvation. It is a gift of God: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Paul said: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" (I Corinthians 3:6-8). John heard these words, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:12).

You may say, "I can't understand how rewards will be meted out." If you can't, then be willing to leave the matter up to God Whose business it is to distribute the rewards. Work that is done cheerfully, offerings that are made literally, and lives that are given willingly in the service of God will be rewarded richly.