

## **Why Me, Dear God, Why Me?**

These are words I pray no genuine redeemed Christian will ever utter from their lips or even think in their mind, or feel in their heart! It's possible for such an outburst to occur in times of severe pain, fear or loss. However, in terms of the quality of your earthly continuance, this could be the most regrettable sentence ever to be conceived! Why is this such a big deal? What is awful about asking God for such an explanation? At first thought this out cry may seem quite benign, and therefore my accusation against it is totally indefensible. While the fact behind my accusation is well documented in Scripture, even though many who feel knowledgeable of our Lord's word are well aware of the references that follow, they may not agree, or not see their relationship to our topic. This could also be, because, in the Scripture the relationship is presented in such very subtle manner. In order to develop the case for this assumption, I will only cite four Old Testament scriptural references, and in each, their significance in terms of our subject.

First we'll look back at Numbers 12:1-15. What we learn here is that Aaron and Miriam spoke against Moses, reminding God that Moses had married an Ethiopian and therefore was not qualified to be the leader of the nation. Because this so displeased the Lord, that what He rendered unto Miriam as a first phase of her punishment, was a case of severe leprosy which lasted seven days. Later, Aaron would share in the second phase of her punishment which was to die before having entered the Promised Land.

Next we will look at the following two chapters which deal with the incident at Kadesh-Barnea. After having spent two intense years at Mt. Sinai receiving the laws, and being in the recognizable presence of God as the Theophany, as well as having agreed to obey His Word, again they rebelled, and murmured against Him. Their punishment was 38 more years in the wilderness until every one of the six hundred thousand plus who were twenty and older died. Only then would the younger generation, none of whom would then be older than  $19+38 = 57$  years old, enter Canaan, the Promised Land. If we consider the normal lifetimes of people living at that time, we see that those in their 20's and 30's would have been as young as in their 40's to 60's when they were all dead. It is

very unlikely that normal attrition would have taken them. I suspect it was God-caused plagues and various unusual causes that contributed to this unusual statistic. Thus God deliberately in various ways hastened many to their grave. This would be so that the 40 year prophecy would be fulfilled.

Next we'll go to Numbers 16:3 where we read that Korah, as the spokesman for 250 of the "princes of assembly" "... *gathered themselves against Moses and against Aaron,...*" claiming that they both had too much authority. Because they were all holy men, they asked by what right did these two lift themselves above all others. By this they were questioning both God's choice and authority. A simple question with a simple answer? A simple question, yes, but one with the worst of all implications and responses! As we learn, Korah, and all of his "princes" plus over fourteen thousand people died because of "the matter of Korah". This all happened after the laws had been given, and before they began their thirty-eight years of wanderings in the wilderness. How more evident can it be that God's response to a challenge to His absolute authority is needed!

The third Old Testament reference is numbers 20:7-12. Here we find that "Moses smote" the rock rather than speaking to it as the Lord had instructed. Furthermore, Moses credited himself and Aaron with providing the water. We learn from verse 12 that this infraction was sufficient to cause God to deny them entrance into the Promised Land. This wasn't a direct challenge to God's authority, but instead a claim to have themselves been the power that brought forth the water. Thus it was a challenge to God's sovereign power over all things. God tempered His punishment of these 2 because of their many years of commendable service to Him.

The final biblical reference regarding this issue is Romans 8:28 "*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.*" This has to be one of the most precious verses in all of Scripture. What is relevant to this commentary are the words "all things" While all redeemed souls are eternally grateful for the blessing that our commitment to Jesus as our

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Lord and Savior provides, these two words are as the other side of the same coin. While on one side of “all things” are all of the physical spiritual and emotional comforts that our indwelling Holy Spirit provides, the other side of “all things” can vary from minor set backs to unbearable losses and suffering. Yet as part of “all things” we are told that even these terrible things are for our good. This should be an indelible reminder that all that happens to us is God filtered and therefore part of His sovereign plan.

Now we will see if we can extract from these references what each have in common regarding our topic. We will find that each of the Old Testament references are examples of disrespect or questioning of God’s supreme authority and knowledge. Again, the New Testament verse reminds us that even though one is saved, there will be, by God’s will, times of great troubles in ones’ life, the cause or purpose of which one may not understand. However, we are assured that it will be, or has happened for our own good, and therefore we should accept it as such, no matter how seemingly inappropriate and undeserving it may seem. Aaron and Miriam challenged God’s omniscience, His memory, as well as His use of His sovereign authority to change His own rules by neglecting the marriage issue. While they did not speak directly to God, they did speak aloud against Moses publically knowing of course that the Lord would hear them. Obviously, this was very bold blasphemous and froth with distrust of God’s omniscience.

The wilderness wandering incident was of course a national tragedy of huge proportions, all because they didn’t have sufficient trust in the God who had promised to deliver Canaan into their hands. They instead trusted in their own wisdom, that is that they would be no match for these huge powerful Canaanites. Their disappointment due to lack of faith was expressed when they wished they had died in Egypt rather than face what was in their promised land. Call it lack of faith in God, or rebellion against God, the fact is that each if these four references carry the stigma of the blasphemous “why me” attitude.

What happened next in the Old Testament sequence of events regarding Korah, as recorded in the Book of Numbers chapter 16. This also should be considered as a huge

collective chorus of “why me” complaints. Perhaps it is better expressed in this case to call it “why not me.” Nevertheless it was a challenge to God’s sovereign authority. It amounted to the same thing, which is simply another means of expressing their human reasoning above God’s, and refusing to humbly accept what God had ordained.

Finally, the rock smiting incident as we all know so well. I believe that it can be more accurately called an act of rebellion. Moses knew the Lord, and had for forty years demonstrated a faith that had stood firm in it probably more times than any other Old Testament patriarch. Yet this one mad act, this one slip, had probably the most severe earthly punishment that God could have imposed on him. First he was denied entry into the land of promise, a denial of what he must have dreamed of and sought to be a part of for those many years. Then his premature death was also part of that punishment. As far as having been in the category of a “why me” response, we can see him in his momentary anger, perhaps only subconsciously, expressing to the Lord “why me, why did you impose on me the never ending responsibility of placating, of carrying their unbelief on my back, and subjecting me to the perpetual stresses that I have suffered so long.”

In the four examples of rebellion and challenging God’s sovereign authority, are in other ways representative of the “why me” outcry. When one chooses to cry out “why me, dear God, why me,” he or she is questioning the authority and omniscience of God. The “why me” implies that what has happened was wrong, unfair or not necessary, and in need of an explanation as to why this happened. They are all simply expressions of rebellion against God and His sovereign will and authority. The four cited examples were each overt actions which expressed rebellion against God. The “why me” is no less wrong than these, and punishable because it connotes the same attitude of the heart.

Hopefully, I have sufficiently demonstrated the significance of this “why me” and how it expresses a rebellious backsliding of faith and trust in our Lord, as well as how He deals with such situations as they affect our earthly lives. With this in mind, my thoughts have drifted to the broader issue of earthly punishment for sins committed, even for those who are saved to eternal life.

Sin is anything we do contrary to God's will. God hates sin even though He loves the sinner, and offers the way, through Christ Jesus, to negate the eternal spiritual punishment that His justice demands. However, in accordance with His perfect justice, the sins of the spiritually redeemed must also be paid for one way or another during their physical lives.

Before going further to defend and explain this opinion, I believe that the unredeemed, those who will never come to faith are relegated to a totally different category of God's justice.

It seems clear that whatever suffering the unsaved are subjected to here on earth, is primarily a matter of cause and effect of their own doing, as well as the social environment and lifestyles they choose. God's earthly dealing with the unsaved is minimal when compared to His involvement with believers, given that they fall into the category of children of Satan rather than children of God. This is because all of the punishment demanded by God's perfect justice will be carried out beginning at the end of their physical lives. It is said that the redeemed are born twice, and die but once, while the unredeemed are born once and die twice. The second birth of the redeemed is to eternal life. The second death of the unredeemed is not obliteration, but eternal absence of God in a place of eternal torment. It all stems from the fact that it is impossible to cleanse the soul of sin except through the vicarious payment provided by Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. Those who receive the cleansing are only those who accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Absent this cleansing, there is no escape from eternal punishment. This is true regardless of one's views on the matter.

Now back to why I believe that the redeemed also receive appropriate earthly punishment in accordance with God's justice for every sin they commit on this earth. Again, it goes without saying that through Jesus, all sins of the redeemed have been cleansed from the immortal soul. This qualifies them all for eternal life with Jesus and the Godhead on the new earth that will follow the millennium. But does that give them license to continue sinning while they remain physically alive here on earth? Scripture makes it clear that it

does not! Otherwise, what would be the purpose of the sanctification process where every redeemed person is set apart from the world, and given the power to alter their sin nature? Here, God begins a work on each redeemed person that will continue to the end of mortal life. God's justice would not be complete, if He did not also invoke some equitable form of earthly punishment for our sins. Scripture tells us in that Christians, that is the redeemed, suffer more than the unsaved for various reasons. I've described 10 reasons in an earlier study called: *"Do Christians Suffer More Than Other People?"*

It is my contention that much of our suffering is in direct relationship to our accumulated sins. Whether or not punishment is retroactive to include sins prior to our redemption, I am not certain, but I suspect it is, based on observations of my own life. In saying that punishment is retroactive, I mean that because God knew before creation all who would be saved, perhaps He started assigning just punishments somewhat on a "pay as you go" basis from the very beginning of our lives. Some of that payment may even have been applied before the sins were committed as sort of a "bank" of advanced payments. While this may sound silly, I find it to be likely, because of my own childhood experiences. The suffering I went through early in life must have far exceeded the just payment for the sins I committed during those same years. Another reason why I suspect this, is that over 70 years of my life had gone by before I was saved. Had not my punishment been sort of on "a pay as you go" basis these subsequent years would have been frightfully more painful. A summary regarding the topic are as follows:

1. Unsaved souls, that is those souls who God knows will never except Jesus, are not necessarily punished by the directed will of God. If they will never come to Christ Jesus as their Lord and Savior, they belong to their father, Satan (John 8:44). In this case, their eternal damnation will fully suffice in satisfying God's justice. Therefore, while most will suffer here on earth for a variety of reasons that, not much of it will be caused by God's directed will.
2. All saved souls are spared eternal punishment through their faith in Jesus and His shed blood on the cross. However, unlike the unsaved who will pay abundantly

for their sins in the eternal realm, the redeemed, in order for God's perfect justice to be fulfilled, must suffer here on earth. Their earthly sins must be paid for through earthly punishment. How God renders His perfect judgment is rarely clear to us, from a recognizable cause and effect perspective.

3. As soon as we are redeemed, we are set aside for our sanctifying process to begin. The first aspect of this is expressed by the power we are given by our indwelling Holy Spirit, to resist sin. The battle between our residual sin nature and this power to resist sin then begins, and continues until our last breaths. The more serious and committed we are to serve our Lord and remove sin from our lives, the more blessed we will be in the eternal life we will share with Him. Nevertheless, I don't believe that this negates the fact that God's righteous judgment is thereby set aside when it comes to our earthly behavior. There is however, another factor that must be dealt with and reconciled, that is God's mercy. The fact of God's mercy is expressed throughout Scripture. In Romans 9:15 Paul reiterates what God said to Moses in Exodus 33:19 which was "*...and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.*" From this we see that it is only by God's sovereign will that mercy is provided. It is not based on our opinion as to whether or not we deserve any mercy.

Our prayers for some can, and I believe they often do help. However, God in His omniscience knows all hearts and all circumstances regarding every matter. Therefore, His assessment is perfect as is His dispensing of grace and mercy. The Hebrew word for mercy in this verse is "racham" meaning "to fondle; by implications to love, especially to compassion, to have compassion (on, upon) love, (find have, obtain, show mercy (have pity))." When God's mercy is provided, and clearly it is often, how it is applied is situation related and always beneficial to the recipient. However, God's perfect justice cannot ever be compromised, or in any way watered down or put aside, otherwise it would not be perfect. How the issue of these two seemingly conflicting characteristics of God

can be reconciled is worthy of a separate intense study, and is therefore beyond the scope of this effort.

4. As noted, while our sins are all forgiven in the eternal spiritual sense, that is that we no longer need fear the eternal fate of the unsaved, that is not the end of the sin story. God's justice must be satisfied on all fronts including in this earthly realm. If that were not the case, then why the need for sanctification? Why wouldn't it be technically acceptable to do as we please that is, to sin with abandon relying solely on our blessed spiritual salvation?

Of course the truly saved soul would not do this, because of his or her more highly sensitized conscience which comes with the indwelling Holy Spirit. One way or another, God's justice can only be fully served through the punishment appropriate to all of our earthly sins by earthly means. Jesus redeemed our soul/spirits from eternal punishment through His vicarious suffering, death and resurrection for all who believe in Him. Because it had been paid in full by Jesus that forgiveness included only sins, as they relate to the eternal spiritual realm. God's justice could not be complete if there was any unpunished sin remaining.

Again Jesus' suffering and death cleansed the soul/spirit of every sin, past, present and future that only redeemed person ever did or would commit. However, that was the cleansing that provided the soul/spirit to spend eternity with God. With this being said, it is my belief that all sins committed by the redeemed in Christ remain an affront to God whereby His perfect justice requires earthly punishment appropriate to each and every sin. This punishment which goes on toward each of us is seldom recognized. Not many believe this. Most attribute it to many other "random" earthly causes.

Jesus paid the price for eternal salvation, not for a punishment-free prance through life. Only through earthly punishment for these violations can God's justice be fully satisfied. Therefore, if there were such a thing as a scoreboard



showing sins committed, versus sins punished. I believe that the score would undulate slightly, but mostly remain on balance. It would show a predominately tie score. None of us can become totally sinless and not subject to the earthly consequences of those sins until after we have let out our last breath, and the glorification process begins. It's those earthly consequences that constitute God's just punishment. Glorification constitutes the final cleansing of our natural propensity to sin, so that we may enter heaven absolutely sin free, therefore becoming qualified to be in the presence of God.

To show evidence of this fact, that there is earthly payment for our sins, I offer the following testimony regarding my own "sin scoreboard." A few years ago I was hospitalized for a condition that had reoccurred several times since God freed me from a terminal cancer. This event was more severe than similar past occurrences, which I had been able to deal with myself. As I lay in the emergency room I could see what the doctor was doing to me. My son Hal also witnessed his works. The pain each time the doctor used the device was very severe. This went on for, I estimate about 2 hours over and over again in what were probably, 15 second intervals. Then I spent the night in the hospital. Only a few days later it all began again just as before. This time as I watched, I became aware that I could do the same at home if I had such a device which was very simple and cheap. I acquired the device and used it several times. While the affliction reoccurred sever times, I never returned to the hospital for that particular affliction. I found that subjecting myself to that awful pain was far more difficult. When the doctor did it, there was no choice. When I did it, I could stop the agony if I chose. The desire to do so was continual. It was only in the persevering, knowing that I had to continue until the end that made it successful. There is much more to know about this, however I have chosen to omit all of the gory details for the sake of any women or children who might be reading this.

It is evident to me now, that there was a large measure of pride in my heart for believing that I had managed to deal with situation. In November 2013, I had a

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very severe reoccurrence of the same problem. It was unrelenting, which forced me to continue to deal with it for many hours at a time. At that time, being two years older at age 76, I finally collapsed, too weak to continue. I was brought to the hospital by ambulance for the same treatment. Over the next few years the problem abated by itself. As I have analyzed all of this, I believe that the hospitalization was structured by God to show me my sin of pride and also to extract the proper amount of punishment that His justice demanded for that very severe sin. All of this was His blessing to me by revealing the truth of my spiritual weakness, and then “evening the scoreboard” through His perfect justice. How can one feel blessed by such punishment? I do, because it showed me a major flaw in my faith and worship, which I have tried to be more diligent in guarding against.

I suspect that many will consider my “scoreboard” belief absurd, and totally absent of any scriptural basis. However, if you examine it carefully, you may see that is little more than a variation on the major theme of this commentary which has several precedences as documented above. This belief in my personal life has, through God’s blessing, given me greater strength to deal with the compounding of difficulties as I have moved on through these last years and months of my life. Just knowing that it is all God’s justice being satisfied is very comforting. Those saved souls whose suffering is such that they feel compelled to cry out “why me dear God, why me” might consider the above described God-provided attitude as a reasonable way to avoid the belief that “God did it”, and that He should have been more compassionate and tolerant.