



# Why Does a Loving God Permit Calamities?

*Hurricanes, Tornadoes, Earthquakes, Tidal Waves, Floods, Pestilences, etc.  
God Can Prevent Them — Why Does He Not Do So?*

*"There were present at that season some who told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13: 1-5).*

NOBLE and good in the sight of both God and man are the generous impulses of charity and sympathy, awakened by hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, shipwrecks, train and airplane disasters, explosions and other great calamities in recent years. And when this is said it leaves little more to be said favorable to such calamities or their influence. While these charities should not be misconstrued to signify that God's consecrated children are rapidly multiplying—for many of the charitable are not consecrated, and some are even infidels—yet they are an evidence that at least some of the original Godlikeness of our race remains; that it has not been wholly obliterated by the degradation of the fall, nor wholly poisoned by Satan and the bad theology of the Dark Ages.

While we live in a period perhaps as selfish and money-loving as any known to history, yet millions of dollars are generously poured forth to aid suffering humanity. However, many who in times of calamitous distress show that they have a tender spot somewhere in their hearts would and do at other times lend time and brain and skill to the arts of war, and to the designing of most horrible implements of warfare; and on occasions when bitter passions are aroused they would relentlessly and pitilessly slaughter a thousand times as many as meet death by the accidents of nature. Yet, for all this showing of the two elements in the same men, we rejoice that the Godlike element of sympathy exists, as a partial offset to the devilish qualities of selfishness and heartlessness, which, under the degrading influence of man's fallen state, have grown strong during the past 6000 years.

Preparatory to looking carefully, reasonably and Scripturally at the question, Why does a loving God permit calamities? let us note some of the absurd views of some Christian people, who should know God's Word and character much better than they seem to know them. Some, whose hearts in the presence of great calamities overflow with sympathy and Godlike love, declare that God is the director and cause of all disasters and troubles (which proves their hearts better and more sound than their theology). Hence, whatever men may do to alleviate such distresses would, according to this false view, be so much done in opposition to God; and whatever love and sympathy they feel is so much sentiment opposed to God's sentiments, which are thus made to appear malicious.

## THE DIREST CALAMITY IMAGINABLE

But it seems a very slight thing to charge the Almighty with causing earth's calamities, in comparison with the thought inherited from the Dark Ages, *viz.*, that God premeditated, planned, from before the foundation of the world, for the everlasting torture of the great majority of mankind—the direst calamity imaginable. Hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, epidemics of disease, *etc.*, would be mercies and kindnesses in comparison with such diabolical schemes and preparations as are accredited to God by the vast majority of His children, who suffer still from the superstition, ignorance and blindness of the Dark Ages and its creeds. Alas, that such false conceptions of the justice and love of our Creator should ever have gained a foothold in our minds—to distort our conception of every right and good quality. (See our booklet, *The Hell of the Bible*, for a thorough examination of this subject.) The difficulty is that men have been led to consider the very Bible which declares God's true character of love and justice as the authority for these devilish doctrines; whereas these false interpretations were originated in the Dark Ages by those who instigated or assisted in burning and otherwise tormenting real Bible believers. O Lord, grant Thy people a great opening of the eyes of their understanding, that they may be able to comprehend the lengths and breadths, the heights and depths of Thy love and mercy toward Thy creatures through Christ!

## GOD'S SYMPATHY—HOW SHOWN

When we declare that whatever there is of love and sympathy in man is only the remnant of the original Divine likeness in which Adam was created, not wholly effaced by 6,000 years of degradation in sin, it at once arouses the question: In what way does God manifest His sympathy and love in such emergencies, when even the hearts of fallen human beings are touched, with sympathy and love, to acts of kindness and succor? A correct answer is, that God is represented in every act of kindness done, whether by His children or by the world; because their actions under such circumstances are the result of their possession of some measure of His character and disposition. This answer is not full enough to be satisfactory; but, thank God, a fuller investigation in the light of His Word reveals a boundless sympathy on His part, providing an abundant succor, which is shortly to be revealed.

But why does not God immediately deliver His creatures from calamities? Or, to go still further back, why does He (who has all wisdom and all power) not prevent calamities—hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, tidal waves, destructive floods, pestilences, *etc.*? And while we are about it, we may as well include all the evils which God could prevent, if He desired—all the forms of sickness and pain and death; every manner of destruction—wars, murders, *etc.*; everything which causes pain or trouble to those desiring to be in harmony with God? The answer to any one of these questions will answer all; for all human evils have a common source or cause.

To comprehend this cause fully, we must go back to the very beginning of sickness, pain, death and sorrow, to the Garden of Eden, where neither famine, pestilence, hurricane, tornado, earthquake, nor human death was permitted, and where man and his surroundings and

conditions were pronounced "very good" (Gen. 1: 31) by God Himself. Man certainly appreciated these conditions, for he had to be *driven out* and prevented from returning by the fiery sword which kept the way of access to the life-sustaining fruits of the Garden (Gen. 3: 24). And this loving Creator, who so graciously provided for the life and comfort of His creatures, and who communed with them and gave them His blessing and the promise of everlasting life upon the sole condition of continued obedience—how came it that He so changed His attitude toward His creatures as to drive them from the enjoyment of those Edenic comforts and blessings, out into the unprepared earth—to toil and weariness and insufficient sustenance, and thus to death?

### *DEATH PENALTY INFLICTED GRADUALLY*

We must remember that the Creator specially or miraculously "prepared" in advance the Garden of Eden *only* (Gen. 2: 8), for man's comfortable enjoyment of the favors of life, and a fitting place for his trial. God foresaw man's fall, and provided that the penalty of sin, "dying thou shalt die" (Gen. 2: 17, margin), instead of being suddenly inflicted, as by a lightning stroke or some other speedy method, should be served out gradually by conflict with the unfavorable conditions of climate, thorns, weeds, sterility of soil, storms, floods, earthquakes, *etc.*, of the unprepared earth, the preparation of which would require 7000 years more to fit it entirely for the habitation of perfect, obedient, human children of God. Adam and Eve, therefore, went forth from Eden convicts, under sentence of death, self-convicted under the most just of all judges, their Creator and Friend. The convicts esteemed it a mercy to be let die gradually rather than suddenly; while to the Creator and Judge this was expedient because of His plan for their future, in which such experience with imperfect conditions would be of great value—a plan for the increase of the race, and for its discipline and final redemption and restoration.

God foresaw that the death penalty, inflicted in this manner, would, through experience, furnish man such a lesson on the exceeding sinfulness of sin and its baneful results as would never need to be repeated—a lesson, therefore, which would profit all who learn it to all eternity, especially when Christ's Millennial reign of righteousness shall manifest the fruits of righteousness in contrast. God also designed that the exercise of man's mental faculties in coping with the disturbances and imperfections of his surroundings and in inventing reliefs, as well as the exercise of his moral faculties in combating his own weaknesses, and the calls upon his sympathy, would prove beneficial in preparing him for future blessings.

### *ETERNAL TORMENT—UNJUST, UNLOVING*

Had the sentence of God (in addition to a loss of Eden's comforts and the experience with sin and death) condemned His creatures to an eternity of torment and anguish, as some still believe and teach, who could defend such a sentence, or call the Judge just, or loving, or in any sense good? Surely no one of a sound mind! But when it is seen that the Scriptures teach that *death* (extinction—Rom. 6: 23; Isa. 43: 17—not life in torment) was the penalty pronounced and inflicted, all is reasonable. God has a right to demand perfect obedience from His perfect

creatures when placed under perfect conditions, as in Adam's case. And the decree that none shall live everlastingly except the *perfect* is both a wise and a just provision for the everlasting welfare of all.

There is a depth of meaning in the Creator's words, as He sent forth His fairly-trying and justly-condemned creatures to labor among the thorns and briars, to pain, sorrow, and disease, and to be subject to the casualties and calamities of nature's unfinished work. He said, "Cursed is the ground *for thy sake*" (Gen. 3: 17-19); *i.e.*, the earth in general is in its present imperfect condition for your profit and experience, even though you may not esteem it so. Adam would have liked to retain continual access to the garden's fruit, to avoid severe labor and to enable him fully to sustain his vital powers and live forever; but in loving consideration for man's ultimate good, no less than in justice, and in respect for His own sentence of death, God prevented this and guarded the way back to the Garden, in order that the death sentence should not fail of execution and in order that sinners should not live forever and thus perpetuate sin (Gen. 3: 22-24).

### *BENEFITS DERIVED FROM THE CURSE*

The children of the condemned pair inherited the effects of their fall, imperfections and weaknesses, and also the penalties of these; for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" The whole race, therefore, as convict laborers, have not only been learning what sin and evil are, and their undesirable results, but also by their labor and skill they are serving to prepare the earth and bring it as a whole to the full perfection designed for it, and illustrated in the condition of Eden—ready for a further purpose of God, of which none but His children (and not all of them) have been made aware through the Scriptures.

We can see, then, that labor and toil were prescribed for man's good. They have kept him so employed that he could not plan and consummate evil to the same extent that he otherwise would have done. And as the earth becomes more fertile, approaching perfection, man's vitality becomes less; so that now, with greater leisure to plot and scheme and grow wise in evil, the period of life in which to do so is shorter. What a mercy in disguise is present shortness of life, under present circumstances! Were some of the "shrewd business men" who accumulate millions of money, and grasp great power in a few short years, to live 930 years, as Adam did (Gen. 5: 5), what might we expect but an absolute monopoly on the part of a few, with the rest of the race for their dupes and slaves?

We see then that God's action in exposing His creatures to death, pain and various calamities was, first of all, one which related only to *his present life on earth*, and to no other; for of any continuance of life, in any other locality, God did not give him the slightest intimation. On the contrary, the words of the penalty were: "Dust *thou art* [wast] and unto dust shalt *thou return*"; "dying thou shalt die" (Gen. 3: 19; 2: 17, margin). True, God gave the promise that, somehow and at some time, a son of the woman would accomplish a deliverance (Gen. 3: 15). But it was then vague and indefinite, merely a glimmer of hope, to show them that though God dealt severely

with them, and on lines of law and justice, yet He sympathized with them, and ultimately, without violating *justice*, or ignoring His own righteous sentence of death, would bring relief.

## *GOD JUST, YET THE JUSTIFIER OF SINNERS*

St. Paul tells us that God adopted a method for the recovery of man from that original sentence of death that came upon all as the result of Adam's fall, which would show the *justice* of His sentence and the *unchangeableness* of His decrees, and yet permit such as are sick of sin to use their experience wisely, and to return to harmony with and obedience to their Creator and His just and reasonable laws and regulations. This Divine Plan, by which God could remain just and unchangeable in His attitude toward sin and sinners, and yet release them from the penalty of sin (death and disfavor), is stated by St. Paul in Rom. 3: 24-26. In brief, this plan provided that another perfect man who, by obedience to the law of God, would prove His worthiness of eternal life, might, by the willing sacrifice of the life to which He was thus proved worthy, redeem the forfeited life of Adam and of his posterity who lost life through him; for it is written, "In Adam all die," and "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation" (1 Cor. 15: 22; Rom. 5: 12, 18).

Since the condemnation to death was thus upon all men, and since another man newly created and inexperienced as Adam was, though just as favorably situated, would have been similarly liable to fall, God devised the marvelous plan of transferring His only begotten Son from the spiritual to the human nature, thus providing a man fit for sacrifice—"the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a *ransom* for all"; "though he was rich [though He possessed glory, honor and riches of wisdom and power above both angels and men], yet for your sakes he became poor [humbling Himself to a lower nature, that of a man, becoming obedient even unto death], that ye through his poverty might be rich" (1 Tim. 2: 5, 6; 2 Cor. 8: 9). Thus the one *first* created, "the first-born of every creature" (Col. 1: 15), "the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. 3: 14), the one who had known God's character longer, more fully and more intimately than any other being, the one in fact who had been honored as Jehovah's chief intelligent and active Agent in the creation of angels as well as of men, the one by whom all things were made, and aside from whom not anything was made (John 1: 3; Col. 1: 16, 17)—this great being, Jehovah's Prime Minister, the one next to Himself in dignity, was entrusted by the Almighty with the great work of redeeming and restoring mankind.

## *JESUS DIED FOR MAN'S DELIVERANCE*

To redeem mankind would cost the sacrifice of Jesus' own life as their ransom-price, with all that that implied of suffering and self-denial. To restore them (such of them as would prove worthy—whosoever *wills*) would require the exercise of Divine power to open the prison-house of death, to break the fetters of sin, prejudice and superstition, and to give all the redeemed the fullest opportunity to show whether they prefer good or evil, righteousness or sin, truth or

error—to destroy all who love and work iniquity (Psa. 145: 20), and to develop and perfect again all who love and choose life upon its only condition—righteousness (Psa. 37: 34-40).

To know the Father's plan and His privilege of co-operation in its execution was to appreciate it and joyfully to engage therein. Willingly our Lord Jesus laid aside the glory of the higher nature which He had with the Father from before the creation of the universe (John 17: 5; 2 Cor. 8: 9). He was "made *flesh*" (John 1: 14; Heb. 2: 9, 10, 14-18), became a man at thirty years of age, and then began the great work of sacrifice, the sacrifice of Himself, for the cancellation of the sin of the first man, to recover Adam and his race by dying on their behalf, as their Redeemer. By giving to Justice the *price* of their liberty from Divine condemnation, He secured the legal right to cancel the sentence of condemnation to death against them, and hence the right to resurrect or restore to life and to all the lost estate and blessings "whom he will" (John 5: 21). And He wills to restore all who will prove worthy. And to prove who are worthy of everlasting life will be the object of the world's thousand-year Judgment Day (1 Tim. 2: 4; 4: 10; 1 John 2: 2; 2 Pet. 3: 9). This fact, *viz.*, that our Lord's mission to earth at the First Advent was to die for the race, that He might undo the results of Adam's transgression, and to secure the *right* to resurrect them and restore them, is clearly stated by the Apostle (Rom. 5: 6-12, 16-19, 21; 1 Cor. 15: 21-24).

### "BY HIS KNOWLEDGE"

Though tempted in all points like as we (His "brethren") are, He ignored His own will (Luke 22: 42; John 4: 34; 5: 30) and all suggestions from others contrary to God's plan (Matt. 16: 23; Luke 4: 4, 8, 12), and *obeyed* God implicitly. And therein lay the secret of His success. Temptations did not overcome Him, as they did even the perfect man Adam, because He was fully consecrated to the Divine will and plan; and this fullness of consecration and trust was the result of His intimate *knowledge* of the Father and His unbounded confidence in His wisdom, love and power. He had knowledge of His previous existence as a spirit being with the Father (John 17: 5; 3: 12, 13; 6: 62). Our Lord's success, then, was the result of being rightly exercised by His *knowledge* of God; as it is written, "By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53: 11). The suggestive thoughts here are two: (1) Even a perfect man failed in trial because of the lack of full appreciation of God's greatness, goodness and resources. (2) The *knowledge* (as in Satan's case) would be valueless, if unaccompanied by sincere love and *consecration* to do God's will. A further lesson to Christ's "brethren" is that both *knowledge* and *consecration* are essential to their following in the Master's footsteps.

Among men Jesus and His mission were not really known; even His most ardent followers and admirers at first supposed that His mission was merely to heal some of the sick Jews, to advance their nation to the rulership of a dying world, and to be a teacher of morals; they saw not at first that His mission was to lay the foundation of a world-wide empire, which would include not only the living, but also the dead of Adam's race, and which would insure everlasting peace and joy to all the worthy, by forever eradicating sin and all who *love* it after fully comprehending its character in contrast with righteousness. Even His friends and disciples were slow to realize these grand dimensions of His work, though He continually repeated them, and bore witness, saying:

"The Son of Man came ... to give His life a ransom for many"; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming [Sinaitic MS omits the words, "and now is"] when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear [heed] shall live." "The Lord ... hath sent me ... to preach deliverance to the captives [of death] and recovering of sight to the [mentally, morally and physically] blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised [injured by the Adamic fall—the greatest calamity that ever occurred]" (Matt. 20: 28; John 5: 25; Luke 4: 18).

The sacrifice of the Redeemer's all, as man's *ransom price*, was offered at the time He was thirty years old—at His baptism. And there the offering was accepted by Jehovah, as marked by His anointing with the Spirit. Thenceforth He spent the 3½ years of His ministry in using up the consecrated life already offered; and this He completed at Calvary. There the *price* of our liberty was fully laid down, when our Lord uttered, "It is finished!" It holds good; it is acceptable by the grace of God, as the offset and covering for every weakness and sin of the first man, and his posterity, resulting either directly, or indirectly, from the first disobedience and the fall. All that is necessary since, for a full return to Divine favor and communion and to an inheritance in the Paradise (*garden*) of God, which the great Redeemer in due time has promised to establish in the entire earth, as at first in the Garden of Eden, is a recognition of sin, full repentance, and a turning from sin to righteousness. Christ will establish righteousness in the earth by the Kingdom of God, which He has promised shall be established and for which He has bidden us wait and hope (Hab. 2: 3), and for which He taught us to pray, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

### "YE SHALL ALL LIKewise PERISH"

Death, in whatever form it may come, is *perishing, ceasing to exist*, for death is "a cessation of life." All mankind, through Adam's transgression, came under condemnation to loss of life, to perish, to "*be as though they had not been*" (Obad. 1: 16). And only one way of escape from that condemnation has been provided (Acts 4: 12). Because of Christ's redemptive work all may escape perishing by accepting the conditions of life (John 3: 16). During Christ's Millennial reign those whom Pilate slew, those upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, those who have perished in earthquakes, storms, floods, mine disasters, fires, explosions, shipwrecks, warfare, murders, accidents, *etc.*, and all others of the race in general ("Ye shall all likewise perish"), sharers in the death penalty now upon all, will be released from the tomb, brought to a knowledge of Christ, His ransom work, and their privilege of repentance and full restitution to Divine favor—life, *etc.* Thus seen, perishing was the Adamic death penalty; but it will be canceled by Christ's "ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2: 6). No longer should it be regarded as a perished condition, but as a "sleep" (John 11: 11-14; Matt. 9: 24; 1 Thes. 4: 14; 5: 10), from which the Redeemer will awaken all, to give each who did not have it before being overtaken by Adamic death a full, individual opportunity to escape *perishing* and to live forever.

Yet, finally, all who will fail to repent and lay hold upon the gracious Life-giver shall *perish*; they will fail to obtain the full restitution provided; they shall never see (perfect) life (full restitution), for the wrath or condemnation of God will abide on them, condemning them to

death as unworthy of life (John 3: 36). As this will be their second condemnation, and an individual one, so the penalty will be the Second Death, which will not be general to the race, but only upon such individuals as refuse God's favor of reconciliation and life (Rev. 21: 8; Acts 3: 22, 23; Psa. 145: 20).

Under that blessed and wise rule of Christ as King of nations (not visible in flesh, however, for He is no longer flesh, having been highly exalted again after He had finished His flesh-life by giving it as our ransom-price. We will gladly supply a Bible study on this subject, free to all who ask), all the evil, depraved tendencies inherited from the fall and from the 6,000 years of degradation will be restrained, held in check, by superhuman wisdom, love and power; and all, being brought to a clear knowledge of the Truth in its every phase (1 Tim. 2: 4; Isa. 11: 9), will be fairly and fully tested. The lovers of righteousness will be perfected and given control of the perfected earth, while those loving unrighteousness under that clear light of knowledge and experience will, as followers of Satan's example, be utterly destroyed in the Second Death. The first death is the destruction to which all were subjected by Adam's sin, but from which all will be recovered by Jesus' sacrifice; and the Second Death is that destruction which will overtake those who, though redeemed by Christ from the first death, will, by *their own wilful* conduct, merit and receive death again (Ezek. 18: 4, 20; Jer. 31: 29, 30). This Second Death means their utter destruction, without hope of another redemption or resurrection, for Christ dieth no more. Nor could any good reason for their further trial be assigned; for the trial granted during the Millennial Age under Christ, as Judge, will be a thorough, fair, individual and final trial (Acts 17: 31; 1 Cor. 15: 25; Matt. 25: 31-46; Rev. 20: 11-15).

### HOW TO REGARD CALAMITIES

As Jesus used the calamities of His time in *illustrating* the just penalty against all who do not flee sin and lay hold upon the Redeemer and Life-giver, so we use them. We declare that destruction, *perishing*, is the just penalty of sin taught in the Scriptures. We denounce as unscriptural the eternal torment theory, which is still believed by some of God's children, as one of Satan's blasphemous slanders against God's character. And we proclaim that only by repentance, reformation and faith in the Redeemer can the gift of God, eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, be obtained. Whoever hears the offer of life is responsible *to the extent* that he understands it; and, according to God's promise and plan, *all* mankind shall, at some time, either during the Gospel Age, or during the coming Millennial Age, be brought to *full, clear appreciation* of these conditions and opportunities, with fullest opportunities for repentance and life (John 1: 9; Jer. 31: 31-34).

Calamities are to be regarded, generally, as accidents, attributable to human imperfection and lack of experience, or to disturbances incidental to the preparation of the earth for its more quiet and perfect condition during the Sabbath, or seventh thousand years (the Millennium), and for its state of absolute perfection forever after the Millennium, during which, under Christ's direction, it shall be given its finishing touches and be made fully ready for the redeemed race, which His reign shall prepare also rightly to use, enjoy and rule the perfected earth. Man is

exposed to these calamities and accidents, and not defended from them by his Almighty Creator, because, (1) man is a sinner condemned to death, and is not to be spared from it, but must be allowed to pass through it; and, (2) by the present experiences with trouble and sorrow and pain, all of which are but elements of death, mankind is learning a lesson and laying up in store an experience with sin and its resultant sorrow, pain and death, which will be valuable in that Millennial Age, when each shall be required to choose between good and evil. The evil they now learn first; the good, and its blessed results and rewards, but dimly seen at present, will be fully displayed then.

### WHY WORLD'S BLESSING IS DELAYED

But some may ask, If this be God's plan for redeeming the world by the death of His Son, and justifying and restoring all who believe in and accept Him, and obey and love righteousness, why did not the Millennial reign of Christ, with its favorable conditions and powerful restraints, begin at once, as soon as Christ had given the *ransom-price* at Calvary; instead of compelling those who would follow righteousness to "sail through bloody seas" and suffer for righteousness' sake? Or else, why not have postponed the giving of the *ransom* until the close of the 6,000 years of evil and the inauguration of the Millennial reign? Or, at least, if the present order of events is best in the Divine wisdom, why does not God specially protect from calamities, accidents, sorrow, pain, death, *etc.*, those who have fully accepted of Christ as their Savior and who have sacrificed and are using their all in His service?

Ah, yes! The subject would be incomplete were this point left untouched. God postponed the promised blessings to the world (Gal. 3: 8, 16, 29; Acts 3: 19-21; Isa. 35: 1-10) in order first to select a Bride for His Son (Acts 15: 14-18; Rom. 8: 22, 19; Rev. 21: 9, 10, 2; 19: 6-9). God's consecrated ones, the Church of the Gospel Age, are a "peculiar people," different from the remainder of the race; and God's dealings with them are peculiar and different also. Calamities, great and small, continually involve God's servants as well as the worldly, and seemingly as much by accident. But herein the Lord provides tests for our faith—intended either to turn us back, if we have not sufficient faith to permit further progress, or to develop, strengthen and increase our faith, if we have it and will exercise it under His direction.

### WHY CHRISTIANS SUFFER

The Lord's assurance to His truly consecrated children is, that all things shall work together for good to them (Rom. 8: 28). God assures them that having entered into a new relationship with Him, all of their affairs are henceforth His affairs and concern. Consequently, they may realize, fully, that however the world may be subject to accidents, incidental to present imperfect conditions under the curse, God's "little ones" are His peculiar care. Not a hair of their heads may suffer injury without His knowledge and consent (Luke 12: 7; John 10: 28, 29). How wonderful! And yet how reasonable when we recall the assurance that, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth [has compassionate love for] them that fear [reverence] him" (Psa. 103: 13).

There are two reasons why God's people are not exempted from the ills of life common to the world:

(1) Such exemption would attract all kinds of characters into the Church, from selfish motives. While God purposes offering His blessings freely to all in due time, He is working according to a plan, in which He set aside the Gospel Age for the *selection* of a special class, for a special purpose—to be used as Divine agents, as joint-heirs with the Lord and Savior, in blessing and enlightening the whole world in the coming Age. Contrary to the general understanding, therefore, God has been as careful to exclude some from His Church as to draw others. His preferences are manifested as not according to color, sex, learning or nationality, but according to faith, obedience and Christlikeness of heart, or will. "Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate [all accepted as members of the glorified Church, the Royal Priesthood] to be conformed to the image [character-likeness] of his Son" (Rom. 8: 29).

(2) It is a part of the necessary schooling of God's children, that they learn to trust Him implicitly—not merely in matters which they can see clearly and understand fully, but in everything. Those who cannot learn this as one of their lessons (and it is one of the most important of all) cannot pass the examination, but will be deemed unfit to reign with the Lord, either in the heavenly or earthly phase of His Kingdom. True, *faith* is not the only qualification for a share in the Kingdom; but it is the most important of all, because without it we cannot so well cultivate the other elements of character; and because without faith the other elements of character would not be acceptable to God, even if we had them in perfection, for "without faith it is impossible to please him" (Heb. 11: 6).

Only from the instructions of God's Word can we see matters from this standpoint; and only when viewed from this standpoint can the trials difficulties, perplexities, persecutions, *etc.*, which come to God's people be appreciated so that they can "rejoice in tribulation" and "in everything give thanks." They rejoice by faith, even as they see by faith, and walk by faith. Such only can realize that present trials are designed by their Father, and intended to work out for those properly exercised thereby a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory—for they look not at the things that are seen and temporal, but, with the eye of faith, at the things promised—unseen and eternal (2 Cor. 4: 18).

### THE "TIME OF TROUBLE"

Some may ask in this connection, Why should this present generation suffer such terrible disasters, *e.g.*, the World War that broke out in 1914, which in its two phases has been the most widespread, impoverishing and destructive war known to history, with millions horribly slaughtered, most nations left bankrupt and others fast approaching that condition, due to heavy tax burdens and great efforts to prepare for further warfare?

Many sign and time prophecies show that since Oct. 1914 we have been living in the great "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation" (Dan. 12: 1; Jesus adds, "no, nor ever shall be"—Matt. 24: 21). In this, "the time of the end," many are running to and fro, and knowledge is increased (Dan. 12: 4). We are glad that there never again need be another time of worldwide trouble like this, "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2: 5), "the last days" described in James 5: 1-5, the "perilous times" of 2 Tim. 3: 1-5.

Man by sin and selfishness brings much trouble upon himself. Thus the droughts, famines, pestilences, upset weather conditions, *etc.*, prophesied for "the day of his [the Lord's] preparation [for the coming thousand-year reign of peace]" (Nahum 2: 3), are brought on largely by man's selfish depleting of the forests and soil, by selfish commercialism, by devitalization of natural foods, by war preparations, by upsetting atmospheric conditions with atomic explosions, *etc.* Thus in accomplishing His plans God works largely through natural means and uses the wrath of man to praise Him; and the remainder of wrath He restrains (Psa. 76: 7-10).

All are aware that Christendom has much to answer for; but just why this present generation should be called upon to suffer more than any other is a problem which some may not fully understand. The Justice of the Time of Trouble upon the nations of our day should be understood when we recognize the fact that we stand today in a period which is the culmination of ages of experience which should be, and is, in some respects, greatly to the world's profit; especially to that part of the world which has been favored, directly and indirectly, with the light of Divine Truth—Christendom—whose responsibility for this stewardship of advantage is consequently very great. God holds men accountable, not only for what they know, but also for what they could know if they would apply their hearts unto instruction—for the lessons which experience (their own and others') is designed to teach; and if men fail to heed the lessons of experience, or willfully neglect or spurn its precepts, they must suffer the consequences which will come upon them.

Before so-called Christendom lies the open history of all past time, as well as the Divinely inspired revelation. And what lessons they contain! lessons of experience, wisdom, knowledge, grace and warning. By giving heed to the experiences of preceding generations along the various lines of human industry, political economy, *etc.*, the world has made very commendable progress in material things. Many of the comforts and conveniences of our present civilization have come to us largely from applying the lessons observed in the experiences of past generations. The art of printing has brought these lessons within the range of every man. The present generation in this one point alone has much advantage in every way: all the accumulated wisdom and experience of the past are added to its own. But the great moral lessons which men ought also to have been studying and learning have been very generally disregarded, even when they have been emphatically forced upon public attention.

History is full of such lessons to thoughtful minds inclined to righteousness; men of today have many more such lessons than those of previous generations, and this generation must suffer for its neglect (Isa. 63: 3-6; Nah. 1: 2; Rom. 1: 18; Eph. 5: 6; Jas. 5: 1-8). Indeed, "the elements" are melting "with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein" are being "burned up"

to make way for the coming reign of peace (2 Pet. 3: 10-13). The Lord has gathered the nations and assembled the kingdoms, and is pouring upon them His indignation, even all His fierce anger; for all the earth is being devoured "with the fire of His jealousy" and soon He "will turn to the people a pure language" in which they will "serve Him with one consent" (Zeph. 3: 8, 9). After referring to the "distress of nations, with perplexity," "men's hearts failing them for fear," etc., and the clouds of trouble amidst which the Son of Man is being revealed, our Lord exhorts: "Then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption [deliverance] draweth nigh ... when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand" (Luke 21: 28, 31). We rejoice as we see Satan's empire crumbling in its overthrow to make way for Christ's coming reign on earth.

*When the stormy winds are raging  
And disasters take their toll,  
When the mighty waves of trouble  
Overwhelm your stricken soul,  
Look to God, who reigns above;  
Never doubt Him—He is Love!*

*Are you filled with eager longing  
For earth's night to turn to day?  
God will soon dispel all sorrow—  
He will wipe all tears away;  
For His Kingdom soon will come  
And His will on earth be done!*