

II. THE JOB OF TODAY

LIFE'S PROBLEMS PRESENTLY
EXPERIENCED

We have not just been "put" on earth... Our living day by day necessitates experiences - experiences that are not at all times pleasant. I recall the story heard many years ago about life is not all sweetness.

The sound of an egg beater drew me into the kitchen one day and there I found my mother at work. I began to watch what she was doing. I would find out just what she put into that chocolate cake that made it so good. There was chocolate, of course, and I reached for a little crumb that had fallen off the bar...it was bitter. I glanced at the other things on the table. There was a cupful of sour milk - surely mother wasn't going to put that in the cake. I saw her add it, along with some of that awful soda that she had given me once for a stomach ache. What kind of a cake could she possibly make out of such things? My nose turned up, but mother only smiled and told me to wait and see.

We were eating dinner. It was true that it looked as good as usual, but I tasted it carefully, a little crumb, then a larger crumb, and finally a whole bite. It couldn't have been better. I forgot all about the sour milk and asked for another piece.

Life is not all sweetness. There is such that is bitter, and we cannot believe anything good will come out of it. Certainly all things are not good, but "all things do work together for good". This is God's promise to them that love Him. So day by day He is making you what He wants you to be, and He will never put anything in your life by mistake.

Problems know no color, nor do they respect any personality.

Problems whether they be big or small, personal or national, know no limitations or bounds. Sufferings enter into every home; sufferings enter into every life. With the back-drop of the suffering of the righteous people, it would be well to realize that just because one is "righteous" does not eliminate that one from trials, tribulations, distress, strains, persecutions and the like. As a matter of fact, this writer has known just the opposite to happen to "righteous people".

Our society has mistakenly equated goodness and righteousness with a particular walk of life and framework which has done great injustice to the Kingdom of God. This, of course, reflects the attitude and actions of those living in the day of Job which we will look during the course of this volume.

Situations that cause sufferings today among the righteous are situations that are unique in that each person sees, reflects, and responds to their situation as only they can. In general, naturally, sufferings could be well grouped into certain fields and within the group many subfields would be formed; and while this is true on a world-wide basis, each person responds differently to a given situation. For example, when death strikes a loved one in a Christian home.

When this occurs, that particular family will react based upon the way they feel and think at that precise moment. They will react as a result of what they have been conditioned to. They will respond further as to how their mind ^{has} ~~has~~ ^{been} programmed, and this, too, will be a subject in this work. On the other hand, the same situation can strike another family that will correspond in age, education, number

of children, job, etc., and for all practical purposes an identical family. Yet, they will respond in an entirely different manner.

I can recall counseling with people who have lost loved ones under near identical situations. One family reacts with a sense of hostility; with great remorse and condemnation do they address God. Another family will remain out of church for a length of time; another family will find themselves in church the very next Sunday. Why the difference?

In the preparation of this work, I have attempted to take a sample poll of the ministers in the mainline denominations of our country. These letters were mailed to many. They went to little towns, villages and large cities. They went to suburbs, downtown areas and rural areas. It was very interesting to read the returned forms. They are presented toward the end of this volume in Section IV, Part A.

STRUCTURAL SOCIETY

AROUND US

It appears to this writer that our society is so geared that to the average person little time is made available to relieve the suffering of fellow people. No longer do we live in the type community which speaks to each other a sense of belonging and an interwoven network of feelings. No longer is the community 18th century America. No longer do we have this feeling of oneness; instead we are diversified and the direction that we point ourselves often-times is in direct contrast to our next-door neighbor.

Our society is so structured that often-times our next-door neighbor does not know of our suffering even. This is sad because this is helping to promote a de-personalized city, a de-personalized family even. Long ago, at least for some, it was possible to receive strength and comfort from friends and neighbors. Now, of course, many still do, but from the general view point no longer is this the norm.

Now our friends and neighbors are busy - so busy that they have only time for themselves. This is the great plight of America. The Church, too, has been engulfed by this atmosphere, an atmosphere that can be labeled many things. No longer is the Church the center of the community from which strength can be gained from one another of its constituents, but today the Church will draw people from across town.

In fact, often-times people will pass many Churches to go to "Their Church". There is nothing wrong with this. There are different ministers and different Churches today serving God and meeting the needs of different people. If a particular need is met by traveling 15 miles to Church, irregardless of the fact that one should belong locally where one can be more involved in the Church, I feel that that person should drive 15 miles to Church.

It is an individual thing regarding Church selection and thus fulfilling one's spiritual needs. Because our Churches are made up of people who drive often-times many miles and who themselves are the only Church entity in the community from this name brand Church, then they do not have a feeling of oneness with their neighbor, particularly if that neighbor is not a Christian. So within the Church the problem is made manifest because people do not work with, nor live with, fellow Church members as was the case long ago. This does not help the individual who is suffering.

The individual who is suffering for so many different reasons and in so many different ways cannot always find strength, help, and comfort from the one sitting next to him in the pew. This is the way our structure of society is and it is unfortunate because the Lord knows we need to get as much strength as we can when we are suffering - be it the loss of a loved one, the loss of business, a temptation, or a catastrophe that strikes us - even a national disaster. The structure of society is such that we do not find the strength in encountering these present problems.

GOD'S PROBLEM

Maybe you have never thought of God as having a problem. Oh, He has a "hang-up". Indeed, He has! I am that "hang-up". You, the reader of these lines are His "hang-up", too. Sorry about that! We are God's problem. We have been created to glorify God and when we have a problem ourself that is an experience of suffering in any case or in any fashion, the way in which we react can either glorify God or not glorify God.

We have been created to glorify God and when we fail in this we fail in the showing forth of His righteousness. We are not acting like children of God. By faith we are children and He is our Heavenly Father. We need to react to these sufferings to which we have been exposed in the type of manner that would be pleasing.

For example - a person who has suddenly had a terrible misfortune will react to this as we have stated earlier based upon various things we will bring out in a moment. Those people around him, watching him, will see much of the depth of his Christianity by what he says and by what he does - even what he does not say and what he does not do. As I see it, the problem of God is to be so real to us that we can express our feelings.

If one is not as near to God as they once were, one has said, "Make no mistake as to which one has moved". God never moves. As a result of our temptations and our sinning, I should say, we move from God. With disasterous strides often-times our course of reaction is one that does not honor the name we profess.

Trouble comes in an assortment of sizes and shapes. The problems are real and monumental. In it all God does not comfort us in

our sorrow to make us feel comfortable; on the other hand, that we may be able to comfort those which are in trouble.¹

There was once in the hospital a man who had lost his left leg. He was bitter. As the Chaplain walked to him to start the conversation the man said, "Well, Chaplain, start cheering me up. You're a Navy specialist, do your stuff." The Chaplain felt helpless. The next day a young marine corporal in a wheel chair rolled up to his bed. The marine was grinning generously, though both legs were missing. No sarcasm came from the Navy man this time. Here suffering had met suffering and understood. Courage had been encountered. Despair had been won over.

When the Chaplain made the visit that afternoon the Navy man looked up and said, "Chaplain, that was some trick - sending me that marine amputee. But it worked, I guess. The nurse just said I have become a pretty decent fellow."

The point being - in our witnessing we can be more effective if we get out of the way and present the One who understands because He suffered and overcame. Beside, by our suffering we are in a position to "feel" with the person presently going through a trial.

Trials are common to all. We must not try to avoid ALL our trials. This can be dangerous to us. Why? I have read that the cocoon of the emperor moth is flasklike in shape. To develop into a perfect insect, it must force its way through the neck of the cocoon by hours of intense struggle. Entomologists explain that this pressure to which the moth is subjected is nature's way of forcing a life-giving substance into its wings.

Wanting to lessen the seemingly needless trials and struggles

of the moth an observer said, "I'll lessen the pain and struggle of this helpless creature." With small scissors he snipped the retaining threads to make the moth's emergence painless and effortless. The creature never developed wings. For a brief time before it died, it simply crawled instead of flying through the air on rainbow colored wings.

Sorrow, suffering, trials and tribulations are wisely designed to help us grow into Christlikeness. The refining and developing processes are often-times slow, but through grace, we will emerge triumphant. (See Job 23:10) The Scripture reminds us, "Answer me when I call, O God of my right! Thou hast given me room when I was in distress. Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer."² Happy is the man whom God correcteth. (See Psalm 94:12 and Hebrews 12:5-15)

Strahan objects that none of the three friends of Job - only Elihu - regards suffering as discipline; they regard it as most as probation. The sufferer is under trial. If he proves tractable, all will be well with him, if not, he will perish (Job 5:17). In any case the word happy serves to indicate the kind of issue which Eliphaz envisions for Job: but only on condition that he receives God's chastening in a humble and contrite spirit; not shrug it off, as he had been doing, while violently protesting the act of it."³

In "all times of persecution, men have found great comfort in the thought that 'whom the Lord loveth...' ..Their suffering has seemed to them, especially under the Christian dispensation, a signal mark of worship. Not that God ever willingly afflicts any of His children; but chiefly, no doubt, because in an evil world it is the good that has to pay the price of goodness, as Christ paid; and

because out of that dark, all through the years, such light has shone as 'never was seen in sea or land.'⁴

Job relates, "But if, when ye do well and suffer..." We are caught in the cords of afflictions. "God is, sometimes, declaring their transgressions. The matter has to be taken seriously, as Job says. No man is righteous; but neither can no man take advantage of that fact to hide his mind away in the doctrine of an evenhanded retribution. Certainly what 'goodness' there is cannot be set down as a guarantee of anybody's safety. Still there are the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Indeed the situation is worse than that. 'But if, when ye do well, and suffer...' i.e. from a sense of good. (I Peter 2:20,19)⁵

Why does God permit evil? "To the author of Job this was not a problem for the mind to tease; it was a problem for the soul to wrestle with. The wisdom of this book and indeed of all Jewish literature, has to do with life and not with logic. It has to do with the sweeping passions of the human heart, with the stalwart qualities of the human heart and with the calculating processes of the human mind, which incidentally may well belong more to the mind itself than to whatever it is in the universe that is ultimately real."⁶

Why do the righteous suffer? "Eliphaz knows. The riddle that puzzles Job is no riddle at all. (Romans 3:10) It is the knowledge that came to him by revelation. In the time when men sleep when the hustle and bustle of life are stilled, he has fallen into a trance and sees clearly with the inward eye what is beyond the realm of sight. While he is meditating on it all, trouble and mystified, a dread experience is vouch-safed him. Apparently he is wide awake when it

happens. Suddenly he trembles, and the hair of his flesh stand up. As he tells of it, it seems to be happening all over again, so vivid is the memory of it.

A breath passes before his face, and behold, there is a presence, as if someone were in the room unseen; vague, specterlike, he cannot make it out...If Elihu is saying anything by appropriating the celestial announcement as his own, 1. that whatever happens to men in general they deserve it. 2. such an exalted view of God as to dwarf humanity's stature to the level of insignificance. Job resents it." 7

Such an explanation renders explanation unnecessary by abolishing not only the ground, but the importance of the question.

MAN'S CYBERNETICS

For one who is not acquainted with the principle of cybernetics, it is the controlling of the mind, in short. A precise definition would be, "the science of automatic control".

Regarding suffering, one programs into their mind certain facets of suffering. By observation someone will record into their mind how others act and react to their problems and to the one even thinking problem - like in elementary cybernetics we program into our mind certain data and this data is forthcoming as the scripture says, "As a man thinketh, so is he."

We have a great responsibility to program into our minds good thoughts, good attitudes toward suffering. Then when we experience suffering in some form, be it in the loss of a love one, an accident, a fire, a failure in some way, or a catastrophe that strikes a nation in the form of a landslide, earthquake, fire, the overflowing of a river, or what have you - we are so programmed that our actions will show forth our attitude in the mind.

Some people who have had a very terrifying experience, and I'm referring to Christians now, God-fearing people who have deep faith and trust in Jesus and who are active in the church - will face their disaster unthinkingly "good". They have built up in their mind a reservoir of strength; they have been successful in programming a feeling of daily communing with God, by daily reading of the Bible, and by regular Church attendance.

Because these experiences have been genuine, and so "thought in their mind" when disaster strikes that person can live on a level which will not sink their spiritual growth.

Sometimes, such persons are referred to as "low-keyed

individuals. By this is meant, I take it, that they respond to adverse situations with a "sense of sanity" - that they do not act on impulse, but they are quiet, as if it were. Some people under pressure can perform very well. They can think while other people do not have this ability. I think a man's cybernetics is seen in this.

In our everyday living we program into our mind a certain file of information which we draw upon when in times of stress, illness or death, in other words, "suffering". Therefore we must be careful that we do not poison our mind with negative "things" which can be damaging.

"Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus" the Scripture exhorts us. We do have the power to condition our mind. We must, as Christians, train our mind. Even in the midst of adverse circumstances we can condition our facilities. This is called mental conditioning. It says in effect that you are what you concentrate on. What you concentrate on grows. What you concentrate on tends to become real. You always find what you concentrate on.

We must program ourselves properly. When obstacles come our way which prevent us from the "norm" of living we can draw from our mental filing cabinet. (The last section of this work is devoted to some suggestive material for programming.)

Our inner man has been so created that there is allowance for stress and strain. This was beautifully brought out in an article some years ago when a 75 mile an hour hurricane hit the 35 million dollar Golden Gate Bridge and bent it 12½ feet out of line; yet the New York engineer said that it was undamaged. It was built, he explained to bend 18 feet before it will break. Christians are made

to stand the storms of life; clouds of adversity do not destroy them, for strong Christian faith outlasts the storm and looks for a sky that will be cloudless clear after rain.

Yet, this strain, or better, testing, is vital to a continuous growth in the Lord. The righteous do suffer - but for a purpose. This is seen in the "proving of them" as written by Mr. James McConkey.

"I stood once in the testing room of a great steel mill. All around me were little partitions and compartments, steel had been tested to the limit, and marked with figures that showed its breaking point. Some pieces had been twisted until they broke, and the strength of torsion was marked on them. Some had been stretched to the breaking point, and their tensile strength indicated.

Some had been compressed to the crushing point and also marked. The master of the steel mill knew just what these pieces of steel would stand under the strain. He knew just what they would bear if placed in the greatest ship, building or bridge. He knew because the testing room revealed it. It is so often with God's children. God does not want us to be like vases of glass or porcelain. He does not want us to be hothouse plants, but storm beaten oaks; not sand dunes, driven with every gust of wind, but granite rocks withstanding the most fiercest storm. To make us such He brings us into His testing room of suffering. Better the storm waters with the Christ, than the smooth waters without Him.

The relationship of our attitude is beyond comprehension regarding suffering. From the Gospel Herald of a number of years ago came this story regarding one, Betty.

Old Betty was converted late in life and though very poor she was active. She visited the sick, out of her poverty she gave to those

who were poorer; collected a little money from others when she could and would give of her own. She told many of the love of the Saviour. At last she caught a cold and rheumatism, and lay in bed month after month, pain-worn and helpless. A Christian went to see her and asked if the change was very hard to bear. "No sir, not at all. When I was well, I used to hear the Lord say day by day, Betty go here, Betty go there, and I used to do it as well as I could. Now, I hear Him say, Betty, lie still and cough. Just lie still and cough."

Many sufferings through which we pass cause us grief to the point of weeping. Crying, or weeping is not bad. It is good. In fact, some one has written that tears are "one of God's good gifts to His children." Tears are escape valves for pentup sorrow. According to modern medical science, pentup grief can be disastrous.

Dr. Erick Lindermann, psychiatrist-in-chief of the Massachusetts General Hospital and a pioneer in the investigation of repressed sorrow tells of a young nurse who tended her father through the long months of his final illness. She was very devoted to her father and often fought back tears as she nursed him.

When he died, a well meaning friend sternly forbade her to show any grief for the sake of her mother who had a weak heart. Within hours the emotionally repressed nurse developed a case of ulcerative colitis. She slowly corroded inwardly because of the disordered impulse of her nervous system. Eventually she died. Killed by the suppressed grief she could not allow herself to express in copious tears.

SECTION II References

1. 2 Corinthians 1:4
2. Psalm 4:1 (King James Version)
3. Interpreter's Bible, Volume 3, page 947
4. Interpreter's Bible, Volume 3, page 947
5. Interpreter's Bible, Volume 3, page 1158
6. Interpreter's Bible, Volume 3, page 914
7. Interpreter's Bible, Volume 3, page 938-9