

Why?

Ponder: Is it ok to ask why?

Scripture: "Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, And whom God has hedged in?" (Job 3:23).

Suffering characterizes this sin-cursed world. Sometimes it's mild. Sometimes it's intense. Seldom, if ever, do we grasp why God permits horrible wars, earthquakes, famines, tornadoes, hurricanes, and the like.

In my growing up days, I frequently heard sincere religious people caution, "We're not supposed to ask why!" Evidently, they thought such a question would cast aspersions on the goodness or wisdom of God.

Job suffered to a degree almost impossible to comprehend. Yet this man whom the Lord Himself described as "a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil" (Job 1:8), asked "why?" seven times in 3:11-23. From the cross Jesus Himself cried out "why?" (Matt. 27:46). Neither Jesus nor Job wanted a forty-page thesis from God detailing all the reasons they were suffering! Their questions were not seeking information, but expressing profound pain and agony. Not once did God say, "You're not supposed to ask!"

As his ordeal went on Job did, indeed, cross the line into challenging God to justify what He was permitting to happen. Some have claimed this means Job lost his faith. I disagree! Because Job knew the Lord, he simply couldn't figure out what God was doing. His extreme and persistent pain, coupled with fending off the cruel verbal assaults of his friends, frustrated him to the point that he said some things he shouldn't have said.

Significantly, God never explained to Job why He had allowed such extreme affliction. In chapters 38-41 He asked Job numerous questions skeptics have mischaracterized as bullying him into submission. But God wasn't saying, "I'm bigger than you, and might makes right!" The real message was, "I know what I'm doing. If you think you can run My universe better, go ahead – give it your best shot!" Job wisely confessed his error and contented himself with knowing God was still with him.

Bottom line: it isn't wrong to ask why. The problem starts when we demand that God give us an answer consistent with our own view of how things ought to work. He owes no one an explanation!

Hymn: "In The Hour Of Trial"

Prayer: All wise Father, help us to trust You, especially in times of great difficulty. In Jesus' name, Amen.