

WHAT IF

INTRODUCTION

Many people here have served the Lord for many years. Some are still new born believers and have just started off on their road with the Lord.

God blesses us mightily in many ways. He sent Jesus to pay the price for our sins, He forgives us, He redeems us and sanctifies us. He provides for us, He helps us, He gives us strength for every day, He comforts us, protects us and He anoints us. This is something we grow used to as children of the Living God.

In fact, the thought of life without the Lord is incomprehensible, He completes us, He is our everything, and our all-in-all.

But sometimes things happen that we don't understand. As so many of us have recently experienced, retrenchment happens, sickness comes or a young person dies, and regardless of our faith, it's hard to understand.

There's a song by Lauren Dingle with these words:

*When You don't move the mountains I'm needing You to move
When You don't part the waters I wish I could walk through
When You don't give the answers as I cry out to You.*

These are difficult statements and I want to speak about this topic today: **"What if God allows something to happen that I don't understand"**.

MESSAGE

THE FIRST QUESTION TO ANSWER IS WHY?

Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people? What a tough question. The standard answer is that we don't live in a perfect world. We live in a fallen world, where because of Adam's sin, the perfection and immortality of Eden have been lost.

That offers little comfort to those suffering with the question of why!

James the Apostle penned these words – "when you suffer tribulation, count it all joy"...You may answer today – "I simply don't understand, nor have the strength to do that".

But the Bible does give an answer to the question, why-Jesus himself gave it!

John 16:33 (NLT) I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

This is not an answer to the question, “why” in the true sense of the word, but it does point us in the right direction... Jesus has overcome the world... **He has made it possible for us to have a better, and much longer future, but not in the world as we know it, rather, in eternity with Him!**

Paul the Apostle says this: **Romans 8:18** (NKJV) For I consider that **the sufferings of this present time** are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

- While we feel and experience terrible suffering in this present world, Paul says – it will be hugely overshadowed by the glory of the future time with Christ that awaits us.
- Speak about Paul’s sufferings.
- *Paint the picture of eternity.*

The problem with answering the question, “why”, is the fact that we struggle to see things from God’s perspective!

- He is all knowing.
- His existence spans time. He is in the present, He is in eternity past and He is in eternity future.
- He knows what lays ahead, and we don’t!

Isaiah 55:8-9 (NKJV) “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. 9 “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Today if we ask the question why, we may not be able to find an answer.

Today, as we look forward to eternity we look to God who knows what the future holds.

IS IT OKAY TO ASK “WHY”

Of course it is! Even Jesus asked why when He cried out to His Father: “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”.

Job is famous for asking why: He lost everything except his wife. He lost his possessions, his health and his children and he asked why:

Job 7:20 (NLT) If I have sinned, what have I done to you, O watcher of all humanity? Why make me your target? Am I a burden to you?

God responded to Job in Job 38:1- 40:14 - He explained to Job that to us mere mortals sometimes there are no words - no rationalisations - that can make sense of the unhappiness we endure.

God's response showed that Job (like every other human being) could not begin to understand the mystery of life and death. We are simply not permitted to understand the way that God works. In this life, time none of us will fully understand why terrible things happen to people.

Yet, something of importance had happened. God responded to Job! God actually came and spoke to a mortal man out of a whirlwind! Job counted in God's eyes and so do you and I.

Job finally realised that his faith was about God and not about himself, and the question about why God was making him suffer no longer seemed to matter. Once Job accepted this, **he somehow managed to live with his trauma without becoming its victim**, and God brought great restoration into his life.

2 STATEMENTS OF JOB TO LIVE BY:

Two statements that Job made truly stand out:

Job 19:25-27 "But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and He will stand upon the earth at last. 26 And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God! 27 I will see Him for myself. Yes, I will see Him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!

- In all his searching and questioning, Job never lost faith – "I know that MY Redeemer lives".
- He also had a view on eternity – he spoke of life after mortal death!

Job 13:15 (AMP) "Even though He kills me; I will hope in Him. Nevertheless, I will argue my ways to His face.

- Job never stopped respecting and hoping God – He said, "Even if God kills me for arguing with Him, I will still hope in Him".

Regardless of our pain, suffering and questions, we must never abandon God – He remains our Redeemer and the key to our eternity. Even in the face of death – possibly by God Himself – we must revere and hope in Him.

What if you were asking the question right now: "Why God? Why? Why has this happened to me? Why am I unemployed? Why am I sick? Why have you not moved? Why has my loved one died?"

Are you willing to continue trusting God regardless?

- Job was and God brought restoration.
- Jesus was, and He brought salvation to all mankind.

Most of us know the hymn written by Horatio G. Spafford, "It is well with my soul".

Spafford was a successful lawyer and businessman in Chicago with a lovely family — a wife, Anna, and five children. However, they were not strangers to tears and tragedy. Their young son died with pneumonia in 1871, and in that same year, much of their business was lost in the great Chicago fire. Yet, God in His mercy and kindness allowed the business to flourish once more.

He wrote the hymn after losing four children at sea when the ship transporting them collided with another ship and sank.

*When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll,
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

It is well with my soul, It is well, it is well with my soul

There is only one possible way that Spafford could have written that song and not been overwhelmed by grief – He must have placed every ounce of His trust and hope in God.

The apostle Paul wrote this to Timothy: **2 Timothy 1:11-12** And God chose me to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of this Good News. 12 That is why I am suffering here in prison. But I am not ashamed of it, **for I know the one in whom I trust**, and I am sure that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until the day of His return.

- ***Do you know the one in whom you trust?***
- ***Are you willing to trust God even if you are in a "what if" situation?***

CONCLUSION - WHAT IF?

Paul's words give us comfort: **2 Corinthians 4:16-18** (NKJV) Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

- We don't have an answer to the question why, but we need to see our circumstance in the context of eternity.
- It's okay to ask why – both Job, and Jesus did!
- When we don't understand, we need to trust regardless – I know my Redeemer lives & though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.
- We need to realise that God is our restorer!
- ***Let us call on the LORD today and trust Him in the "what if" situation we are facing right now.***