

OUR GOD IS A GOOD GOOD FATHER

Our God is a good good Father. We often declare this in our praise and worship of Him in our Church services. It is written in **1 John 4: 8** that “! God is love”. He is omniscient (all knowing). He is omnipotent (all powerful). He is omnipresent (present everywhere). Jesus is God the Son and is God incarnate. It is written in **Colossians 2 : 8 to 15** that “ Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses , having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” Jesus died a horrible death on that rugged cross at Golgotha on our behalf. In **2 Corinthians 5: 21** it is written “ ...He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” In the Gospel of **John 3: 16** Jesus said that “ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” As I am “born again” I believe in Jesus and I am fully persuaded that nothing can separate me from God’s love.

It is written in **Acts 10: 38** that “ ...God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.” Every single work of Jesus was an expression of God’s love and brought freedom, relief and redemption to everyone concerned. However, the following Biblical example is to my mind note worthy because it manifests God’s love in spite of the Leviticus Laws forbidding what Jesus did. It is the case of the healing of the leper. In the **Gospel of Luke 5: 12 to 14** it is written “ And it happened when He [Jesus] was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on his face and implored Him saying, “ Lord, if you are willing, You can make me clean” Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, “ I am willing: be cleansed.” Immediately the leprosy left him. And He charged him to tell no one. “ But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded.” However, Jesus, who then was a Jewish Rabbi, should not have touched the leper as Moses commanded. In **Leviticus 13: 45 to 46** it is written “ Now the leper on whom the sore is, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache , and cry, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ “ He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He is unclean and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.” What I find particularly interesting in this case is that Jesus did not have to touch the leper in order for the leper to be cleansed. This was just an amazing demonstration of love. Why do I say this? In the **Gospel of Luke 17: 11 to 19** it is written “ Now it happened as He [Jesus] went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, “ Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” So when He saw them, He said to them, “ Go show yourselves to the priests.” And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, “ Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” And He said to him , “ Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”

I don't know about you but I have struggled with the vexed question of why bad things happen to "born again Christians, loved by God?" We have on various occasions prayed fervently for one of our saints but they did not recover from their afflictions or died! There are a number of possible explanations.

First, it may have been the time pre-ordained by God for them to die but it is a mystery why they had to suffer. A possible Biblical explanation could have been their confessions. It is written in **Proverbs 18: 21** that "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit." Job is a Biblical example of this. In **Job 2: 6 to 13 and Job 3: 1** it is written "... the Lord said to Satan. Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life. So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes. Then his wife said to him. "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!" But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks, Shall we indeed accept good from God and shall we not accept adversity?" In this Job did not sin with his lips. Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place – Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shunite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him. And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven. So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him for they saw that his grief was very great. After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth." Later Job's confessions changed. In **Job 13: 15** he said "Though He [God] slay me, yet will I trust Him." In **Job 19: 25 and 26** he said "...I know my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at the last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God." According to his confession Job did later see God. In **Job 42: 1 to 13** it is written "Then Job answered the Lord and said: "I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, "Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?" Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand. Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Listen, please and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you and you shall answer Me.' "I have heard of You by the Hearing of the ear, **But now my eye sees You** [my bold]. Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes." And so it was, after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, that that the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has. "Now therefore take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For **I will accept him** [my bold], lest I deal with you according to your folly; because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has. So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shunite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the Lord commanded them; for the Lord had accepted Job. And the Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then all his brothers, all his sisters, and all those who had been his acquaintances before, came to him and ate food with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversity that the Lord had brought upon him. Each one gave him a piece of silver and each a ring of gold. Now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen and one thousand female donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters."

Secondly, failure to involve the Holy Spirit in the picture, particularly in our prayers. This can sometimes lead to our not praying as we ought in certain circumstances. In the **Gospel of John 14: 15 to 17** Jesus said "If you love Me keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever. The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you." In **John 16: 13 to 15** Jesus said "However, when He, the Spirit of

truth has come , **He will guide you into all truth** [my bold]; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.” In **Acts 1: 1 to 8** it is written “ The former account I made , O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “ which” He said, “ you have heard from Me; “ for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “ Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?” And He said to them “ It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority, But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” It is written in **Acts 2** that when the Day of Pentecost had fully come and the disciples were all with one accord in one place the Holy Spirit came upon them. In **Romans 8: 26** it is written “ Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” These scriptures would not be necessary if we did not have to rely on the Holy Spirit on these matters.

Thirdly, are faithlessness, unbelief and unforgiveness. In the **Gospel of Mark 11** there is the story of the withered fig tree. In **Mark 11: 12 to 14** it is written “ Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He [Jesus] was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, “ Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.” And His disciples heard it.” In **Mark 11: 20 to 26** it is written “ Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him [Jesus] , “ Rabbi, look! The fig tree which you cursed has withered away.” So Jesus answered and said to them, “ Have faith in God. “ For assuredly, I say to you, whoever, says to this mountain [problem]. ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. “Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them and you will have them. “ And whenever you stand praying. If you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. “ But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.” In the **Gospel of Matthew 17; 14 to 21** there is a storey of the healing of an Epileptic by Jesus. It is written “ And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying “ Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples but they could not cure him.” Then Jesus answered and said, “ O faithless and pervers generation, how long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.” And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “ Why could we not cast it out?” So Jesus said to them, “ Because of your unbelief, for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain [problem], ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”

Praise the LORD! Oh, give thanks to the LORD, For He is good! For His mercy endures forever.
Psalms 106:1.

John Otieno.