

JOB'S SUFFERING: A MODEL FOR CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN CHRISTIAN

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BY
OGUNDIPE, SOLOMON OBAFEMI
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ABSTRACT

The researcher embarked on “Job’s suffering: A model for contemporary Nigerian Christian” as a tool of analyzing why suffering is prevalent among living beings – man and animal inclusive. The main focus of the thesis is on why should the righteous suffer and what is the rationale behind human suffering? Is suffering traceable to that activity of Satan (Job 1:7)? God is Holy and perfect and all He created are pure and without blemish. Any God fearing human being is of the view that calamity should not befall him or even experience hardship and difficult times. The notion is that only the wicked should be afflicted. Full understanding of the teachings of God in the book of Job is relevant to the contemporary Christians because a good understanding of the teachings there in helps to provide answers to many questions such as why does the righteous suffer?

The research methodology applied in the course of study includes reading various texts and periodical articles of great scholars relevant to the study. The aim is to collect relevant information on biblical and text books on the topic with the view of making a comprehensive analysis on how suffering cuts across every facet of life – man and animals inclusive.

One discovers that nobody complains whenever the going is good and rosy. Whenever the wind blows toward the expected direction human beings sometime forget to glorify Almighty God claiming their achievements to be that of self efforts. However, when there is an adverse condition the response is usually Oh God; why me? Series of complaints will emanate. Righteous people are of the notion that only the wicked should suffer. God at times uses suffering and punishment to test our faith. God attested to it that Job was his pious servant and despite his righteousness, He allowed Satan to test him only that Satan should not touch his soul. Suffering helps in character building by solving problems and by carrying burdens. Patience and endurance can be learnt through suffering experiences, we will see that material possession is insignificant compared with health and life (Job 1:21) suffering should not be interpreted as divine punishment from God as the friends of Job claimed. Rather, it should be seen as testing of one’s faith or as a normal routine meant for living creatures. The researcher therefore recommends that Theologically, the sovereignty of God should be emphasized. There is the need for the human race to admit that we cannot fully understand God and His acts. God’s mercy and Justice should be taught and man’s responsibility should not be ignored. Acts of oppression and intimidation must stop and genuine love must replace bitterness and hatred various denominations should preach Christ and actualize what they preached practically.

5.2 CONCLUSION

In this thesis, it has been observed that the world contains instances of suffering as a result of the continuous presence of evil in the world created by perfect God where the righteous and upright man suffers despite being innocent. Though it is believed that God inflicts evil on human being in order to punish him for sins committed and this perfected to bring him back to Himself by means of reconciliation. The presence of evil in the world is not enough to doubt the existence of God.

The lesson drawn from this is Job stands in for every Christian and passing through difficult periods is normal for the children of God. During difficult period we should not forsake God but remain firm in our faith. When it is convenient we should learn how to praise God and during dark hour – difficult period – we should equally

praise His Holy name. God is the ultimate source of human being and to Him we shall all return to give an account of our activities on earth.

Generally the experience of evil in the world continues to call for human attention and reflection on the way forward. It should be noted that the presence of evil can be an opportunity for maturation or an occasion to direct one's life to the essential. It is observe that existence of evil in this world does not negate the goodness of God. For God in His infinite mercy had controls over the affairs of the universe to cushion the effects of evil in the world. As long as the world is in existence occupied by human being, a final solution for the problem of evil in the world is not in sight. Various writers admit that man will continue to struggle with the problem of evil until the end of time and consummation of salvation (Edited by Audi, Oladejo, Nehinlola and Enyinnaya, 2011, p. 60).

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

For the fact that problem of suffering is a perennial challenge and constant obstacle to the human race, in particular, there is a need for conserted efforts of the human race in solving or finding solution to this dare devil plaguing human race theologically.

The sovereignty of God be emphasized: There is the need for human race to admit that we cannot fully comprehend God and His acts. Louis Berkhof observed that, "He rules as king in the most absolute sense of the world, and all things are dependent on Him and subservient to Him (Beckhof, 1981, p. 76). "The secret will of God pertains to all things which He wills either to effect or to permit, and which are therefore absolutely fixed. The reveal will prescribes the duties of man, and represent the way in which he can enjoy the blessing of God (Beckhof (77-78). As a result of

His sovereignty, He cannot be questioned. The sovereignty of God is well expressed by the Psalmist "Our God is in heaven, He does whatever He pleases (Ps. 115:3) By this the Psalmist recognizes that God can permit certain events in order for His name to be adored.

God's mercy and Justice should be taught: Someone would have assumed that God would one day wipe out the entire world as a result of mischievous act in it. For instance Nigeria as a case study – Boko Haram bombing and destruction of innocent lives even worshippers in the house of God, kidnapping of innocent citizen by Niger Delta militant youths, shedding of innocent blood by police officers at road blocks and general insecurity in the country. Oppression of the mass as by ruling class. But the mercy and love of God continue to sustain the world. It is as a result of His mercy that God entered into human history in order to participate in the suffering of humans and die on the cross to redeem them. "This was not what anyone ever would have expected, it was not anything human could have devised (Colson 2001 p. 104) God is not only merciful, He is also a just God. In the "eschaton" in line with biblical injunction, wickedness shall be judged. In Revelation 21:4, there is a promise that there will be a new heaven and a new earth that will be free of sin and suffering.

As a result of God's mercy and justice there will be a renewal (ed. Audi, Oladejo, Nihinlola and Enyinnaya, 2011, p. 61).

The Responsibility of Man should not be ignored: Evil crept into the world through man's disobedience in the Garden of Eden. Majority or most of the suffering and pains encountered or experienced by man are caused by self. In order to reduce evil in the world man must live a responsible life in the world and pay attention to his immediate environment. Acts of oppression and intimidation must stop and genuine

