

Why Not End It All Now?

Why doesn't God put an end to the world's problems? Everywhere we look, we see war, disease, disaster, cruelty, corruption. Why doesn't God just put an end to all the problems in the world? We do have so many problems! Every time I hear or read the news I am disturbed by the terrible things that are happening in our world. And it's not just around the world ... people are struggling even in our own families, our own communities. Recall Jesus' words in John, chapter sixteen: "In this world you will have trouble..." (vs. 33). It was no surprise to Jesus and it shouldn't surprise us either. But Jesus also said, "... but take heart! I have overcome the world."

What a powerful statement. But, that's the tension we live in as followers of Jesus. On the one hand, we have eternal hope and certainty. Jesus won the victory over sin and death through His death and resurrection. We don't have to worry or fear, but on the other hand, we live in this "vale of tears." We wait for the restoration when Jesus will come again. But, if Jesus has already overcome the world, why doesn't He use His power to make things different?

The fact is, He will! But, for now, He is waiting. He has a plan. I think of the Apostle Peter who spoke to Christians who were getting disheartened by all the troubles they were experiencing and there was plenty of it in the first century! They were living under Roman rule, being persecuted and shunned by people who rejected Christ; it was no picnic. Peter said to these Christians: "First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this "coming" he promised?'" (2 Peter 3:3-4 NIV). Then he added this, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you. He doesn't want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9 NIV).

What that tells us is that God isn't slow or running behind schedule when it comes to fixing the world's problems. He is waiting so that many more can hear the Good News and be saved. But it's not easy for us to be patient like that. Troubles are hard to take. That's why God's Word always encourages us not to lose heart, but to persevere with His grace and power, the power He gives.

I think of God's Word to Joshua as he faced frightening new challenges. God said, "Be strong. Be courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for I the LORD your God am with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9). I also think about Paul's moving and encouraging words in Romans, chapter 5; "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace which we stand in, and we rejoice in the

hope of the glory of God." He also adds: "Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that our suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and" think about this: "character he says produces hope" (Romans 5:1-4). We need that endurance to live day by day, because the world in which we live is a broken place; broken by sin. Sin isn't just a lighthearted misdeed here and there. Our sin is what causes chaos, injustice, terrible pain, and tragic death in our world.

God is honest about the grave situation in which we find ourselves, and as we travel through this world, waiting upon God, He sustains us, He encourages us. He also uses us to make His difference, bring His love and grace to the serious problems we face. In that sense, we can be part of God's answer to the problems. We're here on this earth to show the love of God. We are here to reach people with the message of repentance and forgiveness in Christ. We are sent by the Savior to help prepare people for that great day of restoration that day that will come upon us like a thief in the night--suddenly, without expectation.

And as we wait, God does two things for us. He cares for us--all of us. Jesus said about His Father in heaven: "For he makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good. He sends the rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). God shows His love to all people. Secondly, He constantly calls us, all of us, to Himself by faith. Remember how Paul said that God "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). And so we also wait, but we wait with great hope.

That's the View from Here.

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