

For God is Love

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GOD IS LOVE

He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

1 John 4:8-10

Every day, we are continually overwhelmed with the turmoil of the world, whether it is the global economic downturn, natural disasters, civil war, or even localized crime. It is not hard for anyone to see the chaos that surrounds us if we look for it, even if it is just a casual glance. In the news, we are constantly bombarded with stories and articles on the subjects of terrorist attacks, social upheaval, and government unrest, and it appears that no part of the world has gone unscathed.

How many people does the reader know who have some kind of serious ailment, whether from an accident or disease? How many trials and afflictions does the reader have in his or her own life? Perhaps the reader is currently looking for a job and cannot find one? Perhaps maybe the reader has lost a family member or friend, is suffering from depression, or is experiencing discord with a loved one. In the world today, trials affect each and every one of us in a variety of ways.

Despite whether the reader is a member or non-member of a church, our faith can be severely shaken by these tribulations. Often times we see the death, the sick, and the impoverished of the world and ask ourselves why God would allow this to happen, or maybe we ask, if there is a God, why is there so much evil in the world? In the subsequent chapter, it is our desire to answer these questions.

The Will of God

We hope the reader does not feel ashamed or worried in asking why bad things happen in the world, they are not the first person, or the last, to ponder this question. It is our prayer that this work might edify others and put this question to rest. In order to accomplish this however, the reader must first come to a better understanding of God and His ways. In Isaiah, chapter fifty-five, God said, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways *higher* than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."¹ Further, Paul wrote in his first epistle to the Corinthians, "Because the foolishness of God is *wiser* than men; and the weakness of God is *stronger* than men."²

It is not possible for mankind to comprehend all the things that God can comprehend, especially without the gift of the Holy Ghost. Nonetheless, these two Scriptures are not meant to shut down the question stated above, but to establish a solid foundation, which is simply that God's ways are not physical, or temporal, but instead they are spiritual. The Lord said in the Doctrine and Covenants, "Wherefore,

¹ Isaiah 55:8-9

² 1 Corinthians 1:25

verily I say unto you, that *all things* unto me are *spiritual*, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal, neither any man, nor the children of men; neither Adam your father, whom I created; behold, I gave unto him that he should be an agent unto himself; and I gave unto him commandment, but no temporal commandment gave I unto him; for my commandments are spiritual; they are not natural, nor temporal, neither carnal nor sensual.³” The truth that God’s will is spiritual is also evident in the second chapter of Genesis, as we read that God created all things spiritually before they were ever created naturally on the earth. Please read the following Scripture from Genesis 2:5-9:

2:5 For I, the Lord God, created all things of which I have spoken spiritually, ***before*** they were naturally upon the face of the earth; for I, the Lord God, had not caused it to rain upon the face of the earth. **2:6** And I, the Lord God, had created all the children of men, and not yet a man to till the ground, **for in heaven created I them**, and there was not yet flesh upon the earth, neither in the water, neither in the air; **2:7** But I, the Lord God, spake, and there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. **2:8** And I, the Lord God, formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul; the first flesh upon the earth, the first man also; **2:9** Nevertheless, all things were before created, but ***spiritually were they created and made***, according to my word.

Unfortunately, in our prayers and wishes, we often fixate on the physical blessings, such as a job, a promotion, or maybe even a healing from an infirmity, rather than on the spiritual blessings. Sadly, if we do not receive those physical blessings, we tend to question God and began to doubt Him, and this is because we do not yet fully understand His will or desire for each one of us. Of course, this is due in part because of that natural man, which is in opposition to the nature of God, who has said “that all things unto me are spiritual.” While it is true that *natural* man cannot understand the things of God because they are spiritually discerned, it is also true that God desires for mankind to both know Him and to know His will, which is why He not only sent His Son, but also the Holy Ghost. Paul wrote in Romans, “And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the *renewing* of your mind, that ye may *prove*⁴ what that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is.”⁵

In order for us to know His will, God has given man the Spirit of God, who testifies of both the Father and the Son, and has done so from the foundation of the world. “And in that day, the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son.”⁶ As discussed previously in **Chapter Three**, the Holy Ghost is the will of God in motion which speaks to the inner man and leads us into all truth and righteousness if we will hearken to the voice of the Lord. God has also revealed His will for mankind through the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. “That whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have *eternal life*. For God *so loved* the world, that he gave his Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish; but have *everlasting life*. For God

³ DC 28:9

⁴ Prove is “to try; to ascertain some unknown quality or truth by an experiment, or by a test or standard.”

⁵ Romans 12:2

⁶ Genesis 4:9

sent *not* his Son into the world to *condemn* the world; but that the world through him *might be saved*.⁷
Please read the following Scripture from the Doctrine and Covenants 22:23b:

22:23a And the Lord God spake unto Moses, saying, The heavens, they are many and they can not be numbered unto man, but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine; and as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof, even so shall another come; **22:23b** and there is no end to my works, neither to my words; for this is ***my work and my glory***, to bring to pass the immortality, and eternal life of man.

From these Scriptures we learn that God's desire and will is for mankind to receive the greatest gift of all, the gift of eternal life, which is described partly in the twenty-first chapter of Revelation, "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be *no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain*; for the former things are passed away...He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and ***he shall be my son***.⁸"

It is important to understand that it is not always the desire or will of God to bestow upon mankind those physical and temporal blessings. Instead, God yearns for us to believe in Jesus Christ and to become His sons and daughters as described in **Chapter Two**. The following was transcribed from a sermon given by Brother Jim Negaard, who is a teacher in the Outreach Restoration Branch:

When I come to Christ, when I think about what I can become, I generally come to Him with a problem I have, [such as] Lord I want you to get rid of my bad temper, I want you to help me to use better language, get rid of some problem I have. Well, the Lord is interested in nice people, but nice people aren't necessarily redeemed people. Redeemed people are nicer people, they have to be they got Christ in them, but just because your nicer isn't necessarily what He is interested in you becoming. What He is interested in you becoming is a new creature, a son of God, and so when I come to Him with my problems sometimes [saying], "Lord fix this," that is not particularly His main point of interest, and so I become frustrated because it is not being fixed the way I want it.

*What He is interested in, is making me become a son of God, something totally different. Instead of Him fulfilling my interest in taking something from me, He is wanting to give something to me. Instead of Him taking away my anger, He is trying to give me patience. He is trying to give me discipline. He is trying for me to learn humility. He is trying to give all those things, and He will take away those things I want Him to, but let Him work with you, don't give up. Understand the **direction He is coming from**, what He wants for you is not necessarily the same thing you want. He is wanting you to become a son of God.*

⁷ John 3:15-17

⁸ Revelation 21:3-4 and 7

God Wept

It is God's desire that we come to know His will, which is for us become His sons and daughters through the covenant of baptism, but perhaps His greatest hope is that mankind might come to know the joy of choosing Him, our Heavenly Father. In Genesis, God demonstrated to Enoch both how much He loves His creation and how He desires that all will come unto Him. In the following Scripture, Enoch, the leader of God's people in the city of Zion, was taken up into the bosom of the Father and talked face to face with God and he was shown all things that were to come to pass. [To read more concerning Zion, please refer to **Chapter Twenty-Three**]. The following passage is found in Genesis 7:35-40:

7:35 And it came to pass, that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, **and wept**; and Enoch bore record of it, saying, How is it that the heavens weep, and shed forth their tears as the rain upon the mountains? And Enoch said unto the Lord, How is it that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity? **7:36** And were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, and millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations; **7:37** And thy curtains are stretched out still, and thou art there, and thy bosom is there; and also, thou art just, thou art merciful and kind forever; **7:38** Thou hast taken Zion to thine own bosom, from all thy creations, from all eternity to all eternity; and naught but peace, justice, and truth is the habitation of thy throne; and mercy shall go before thy face and have no end. **How is it that thou canst weep?**

7:39 The Lord said unto Enoch, Behold, these thy brethren, they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their intelligence in the day that I created them. **7:40** And in the garden of Eden gave I unto man his agency; and unto thy brethren **have I said, and also** gave commandment, that they should love one another; and that they should choose me their Father.

In the Scripture above, God showed Enoch all things that were to come to pass on the earth, including the wickedness of the people in the days of Noah, and while Enoch saw these things, he also witnessed God weeping over the people. Enoch did not understand why God, who is the Creator of all and is so vast, so knowing, so powerful, and so great, could cry, and so he asked God, "How is it that thou canst weep?" God answered Enoch and said, "they are the workmanship of mine own hands," or in other words, God said that I created them. Moreover, He said that I loved them so much that I gave unto man his ability to choose. As will be seen in **Chapter Twenty-one**, God does not want people to choose Him because they were forced to, or because they were commanded to, but because they love Him.

Therefore, even knowing that many people would choose to disbelieve in Him and His Son, He sent Jesus Christ to atone for the sins of the world. We would ask the reader, "Can you imagine loving someone so much that you would lay down your life for them, even knowing that they might choose against you? Can you imagine loving someone so much that you would sacrifice the life of your child for them?" This is what our Heavenly Father did for each and every soul when He sent His Only Begotten to be lifted up on the cross in order that Jesus Christ might draw all men to God. As if the gift of His Son was not enough, God wished more than anything that mankind would have joy in this life and eternal happiness in the life to come by choosing Him, their Heavenly Father.

What goodly parent would not want their children to have joy? How sad would that parent be to see their children go against their teachings and chase after the world? Would not that parent weep to see their children choose evil things instead of righteous things? This is the best example that we can give which demonstrates God’s love for us, however, as elder James Rao once said, “How can we understand the sorrow of an infinite being?”

As Enoch remained with God, the Lord spoke to him and continued to show him all things. “And it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Enoch, and told Enoch all the doings of the children of men. Wherefore Enoch knew and looked upon their wickedness, and their misery; and wept, and stretched forth his arms, and *his heart swelled wide as eternity*, and his bowels yearned, and all eternity shook... And as Enoch saw thus, he had bitterness of soul, and wept over his brethren, and said unto the heavens, I will refuse to be comforted.⁹” Nevertheless, Enoch was comforted both in Jesus Christ, who was slain from the foundation of the world to be the atonement for our sins, and in the promise that Jesus would come on the earth in the meridian of time, as well as in the last days to reign on the earth in righteousness for a space of a thousand years. [Read more about the love of God and Jesus Christ in **Chapter Twelve**]

As we read in the third chapter of John, we learn of the love that God has for mankind through the Son of God. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish; but have everlasting life.” It is important to understand that despite our own disobedience, God gave His everything, the life of His most precious and beloved Son, that the way would be prepared for us to come back into His presence and to inherit the Kingdom of God. It is therefore our choice to choose Him or to not choose Him.

The following Scripture passages also demonstrate the sacrifice that the Father and the Son made for all mankind. It is noteworthy for the reader to know that Christ came not only to be the atonement for our sins in His death on the cross, but He also showed mankind the way to live through His life, ministry, and resurrection.

Reference	Scripture
Romans 5:6-8	5:6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 5:7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
1 John 2:1-5	2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. But if any man sin and repent, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2:2 And he is the propitiation ¹⁰ for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.
2 Corinthians 5:17-19	5:17 Therefore if any man live in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new, 5:18 And receiveth all the things of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of

⁹ Genesis 7:47-48 and 51

¹⁰ A fancy word for atonement

reconciliation; **5:19** To wit, that God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing¹¹ their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Mosiah 1:100-107

1:100 And lo, he [Jesus] shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; **1:101** For behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people. **1:102** And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things, from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary. **1:103** And lo, he cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men, even through faith, on his name; **1:104** And even after all this, they shall consider him a man, and say that he hath a devil, and shall scourge him, and shall crucify him. **1:105** And he shall rise the third day from the dead; and behold, he standeth to judge the world. **1:106** And behold, all these things are done, that a righteous judgment might come upon the children of men **1:107** For behold, and also his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died, not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned.

DC 18:2h-2k

18:2h For, behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, **that they might *not* suffer**, if they would repent; but if they would not repent, they must suffer even as I; **18:2i** which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit, and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink; **18:2j** nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men; **18:2k** wherefore, I command you again to repent

God Prepared a Way

At this time, the reader may be questioning what the point is in discussing the will of God, but please rest assured, the original question of why evil things happen in the world will be answered in due time. It is important for the reader to understand that not only did God prepare a way for our salvation through Christ alone, but He also prepared a way that mankind might accomplish all His commandments. Nephi wrote, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, *save he shall prepare a way* for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them... Wherefore, *he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works* among the children of men; for behold he hath all power unto the fulfilling of all his words. And thus it is. Amen."¹²

Paul wrote in second Timothy, "If any man therefore purge himself from these [sins], he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and *prepared* unto every good work."¹³ In other words, if we sanctify ourselves through purging our hearts from sin by taking up our cross and following after Jesus Christ, the Lord has promised that we will be an instrument in His hands and He will prepare the way for us to serve Him. Thereby, we might inherit the everlasting Kingdom of the Lamb.

¹¹ Attributing

¹² 1 Nephi 1:65 and 1 Nephi 2:101-102

¹³ 2 Timothy 2:21

God said in Genesis, “Behold, I am God; Man of Holiness is my name; Man of Counsel is my name; and Endless and Eternal is my name also. Wherefore I can stretch forth my hands and hold all the creations which I have made, and mine eye can pierce them also.¹⁴” God both understands and knows the weaknesses and tribulations which face man to a greater extent than even we do. “For we have not a high priest [Jesus Christ] which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was on all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.¹⁵” Therefore, God prepared the way that we might come to Him. Please read from the Book of Mormon, Mosiah 2:9-17:

2:9 I say unto you, if ye have come to a knowledge of the goodness of God, and his matchless power, and his wisdom, and his patience, and his long suffering towards the children of men, **2:10** And also, the atonement which has been **prepared from the foundation of the world**, that thereby salvation might come to him that should put his ***trust in the Lord***, and should be ***diligent in keeping his commandments***, and ***continue in the faith even unto the end of his life***; I mean the life of the mortal body; **2:11** I say, that this is the man who receiveth salvation, through the atonement which was prepared from the foundation of the world, for all mankind, which ever were, ever since the fall of Adam, or who are or who ever shall be, even unto the end of the world; and this is the means whereby salvation cometh.

2:12 And there is none other salvation, save this which hath been spoken of; neither are there any conditions whereby man can be saved, except the conditions which I have told you. **2:13** Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things both in heaven and in earth; **2:14** Believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; **2:15** Believe that man **doth not** comprehend all things which the Lord can comprehend. **2:16** And again: Believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you: **2:17** And now, if you believe all these things, **see that ye do them**.

God’s Way, Weakness and Love

Through the Scriptures and the Spirit, God has allowed mankind to better understand His ways, and this is so that we can witness that God is love. One method in particular that the Lord has provided to fulfill all righteousness, is weakness. The natural man sadly, who is an enemy to God, would state that weakness is a cursing, and that we should take pride in ourselves [read **Chapter Six**]. Conversely, God shares that He gave man weakness for a great blessing. As mentioned previously, the Lord understands our faults and shortcomings, to which pride is perhaps one of our greatest. Without weakness, there is a strong possibility that we would rarely, if ever, turn to our Heavenly Father, who desperately tries to share how much He loves mankind. Rather than take away our weakness, God wants to share His love.

¹⁴ Genesis 7:42

¹⁵ Hebrews 4:15-16

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul gave a message about life after death, writing, “It [mankind] is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.¹⁶” In other words, mankind is “conceived in sin¹⁷” and is created in weakness. Nonetheless, weakness is a way in which we can be made strong in the Lord by turning to Him and trusting in Him so that we might be raised in power unto salvation. While Paul wrote his second epistle to the Corinthians, he explained that he suffered from “a thorn in the flesh,¹⁸” which is generally interpreted to be a physical ailment, however it could also be a spiritual trial. Regardless, please read on in 2 Corinthians 12:8-11:

12:8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. **12:9** And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my ***strength is made perfect in weakness***. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. **12:10** Therefore I take ***pleasure*** in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses ***for Christ's sake***; for when I am weak, **then am I strong**. **12:11** I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me; for I ought to have been commended of you; for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.

In the Scripture above, we see that Paul, one of the apostles, prayed to God for a blessing. In particular, he prayed that God would heal him of his infirmity. Instead of taking away a weakness however, the Lord desired to give Paul strength, and thus Paul was humbled in his weakness and even gloried in it, writing, “I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me; for I ought to have been commended of you.” Paul meant that he must praise God for giving him this affliction because it prevented him from becoming prideful. The following passage is taken from the Book of Mormon, Ether 5:27-28 and 38:

5:26 Thou hast also made our words powerful and great, even that we can not write them; wherefore, when we write, **we behold our weakness**, and stumble because of the placing of our words; and I fear lest the Gentiles shall mock at our words. **5:27** And when I had said this, the Lord spake unto me, saying, Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness; and if men come unto me, I will shew unto them their weakness. **5:28** ***I give unto men weakness***, that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak thing become **strong unto them...5:38** And because thou hast seen thy weakness, ***thou shalt be made strong***, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father.

God has given man weaknesses and afflictions in order for us to be humble and for us to seek Him. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; Who, being in the form of God, thought it *not robbery* to be equal with God; But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; And being found in fashion as man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:43

¹⁷ Genesis 6:57

¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 12: 7

him, and given him a name which is above every name.¹⁹ If mankind is humble, then God will make them strong, and His commandments will not be grievous, for we read in James, chapter four, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”²⁰

Weakness Worketh Peace

Many people like to quote first John, which states, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.”²¹ It is crucial however to read the next two verses. “For whatsoever is born of God *overcometh* the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, *but he that believeth* that Jesus is the Son of God?”²² In order for God’s commandments to be not grievous, we must first believe in Jesus Christ, which is to know that He is our Redeemer, our Savior, and our Advocate. Please read from Ether 1:77-78, DC 43:8a, and 1 John 2:1-3:

1:77 Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world ***to redeem my people***. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. **1:78** In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters.

8a Hearken ye to these words, behold, I am Jesus Christ, ***the Savior of the world***.

2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. But if any man sin and repent, we have an ***advocate with the Father***, Jesus Christ the righteous; **2:2** And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. **2:3** And hereby we do know that we know him, ***if*** we keep his commandments.

In the passages above, the reader can surmise that in order for us to know Jesus Christ we must first follow His commandments. In order to accomplish this, mankind must cast off their pride, humble themselves before the Lord, feast on the words of Christ, and endure to the end. Of course, this is much easier said than done, but always remember that God has prepared a way for all mankind to come unto Him. Even though we might believe in the Father and the Son, and pray often, this does not mean that we will go through life without trials or tribulations, but that through these trials and tribulations, we can learn the peace that God is with us depending on our response. Please read from Mosiah 11:23-24 and Helaman 5:90:

11:23 Nevertheless the Lord seeth fit to ***chasten*** his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith. **11:24** Nevertheless, whosoever putteth his trust in him, the same shall be lifted up at the last day.

¹⁹ Philippians 2:5-9

²⁰ James 4:10

²¹ 1 John 3:3

²² 1 John 3:4-5

5:90 For behold, they have been a chosen people of the Lord; yea, the people of Nephi hath he [God] loved, and also hath he chastened them; yea, in the days of their iniquities hath he chastened them, **because** he loveth them.

Christ told the disciples in John, chapter fourteen, “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; **not as the world giveth**, give I unto you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let it be afraid.²³” Jesus taught that we need not be afraid in our afflictions, because God has given man the Comforter, which is the Spirit of God, also called the Holy Ghost, to guide mankind to all truth and righteousness.

If we turn the Lord in prayer and faith during our trials, He **will** be with us. He will never leave us, nor forsake us. Nevertheless, this does not mean that we will always get what we want, such as in the example of Paul and his infirmity, but that will we have peace in our hearts and minds that we are not alone. [Read more about prayer in **Chapter Sixteen**]. Please read from the Joshua 1:9, Deuteronomy 31:8, Philippians 4:6-7, and Alma 17:25-26:

1:9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest...**31:8** And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee; fear not, neither be dismayed...**4:6** Be afflicted for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. **4:7** And the **peace of God**, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

17:25 And I have been supported under trials and troubles of **every kind**, yea, and in all manner of afflictions; yea, God has delivered me from prison, and from bonds, and from death; yea, and I do put my trust in him, and he will still deliver me; **17:26** And I know that he will raise me up at the last day, to dwell with him in glory; yea, and I will praise him for ever...

Patience Worketh Hope

If mankind would put their trust in the Lord, “for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,²⁴” then they would receive the Comforter and the peace of God that passes all understanding. In so doing, we would not be fearful or sorrowful, but instead filled with comfort, joy, patience, and the fruits of the Spirit. Therefore, when those trails that are common to all mankind afflict us in everyday life, they will appear as if they are nothing, for we will be made strong in the Lord. In this, God’s commandments will no longer be grievous and we will be granted patience in all things. “Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort; thou hast given commandment **to save me**; for thou art my rock and my fortress.²⁵” Read the following Scripture from James 1:2-7:

²³ John 14:26-27

²⁴ Hebrews 11:6

²⁵ Psalm 71:3

1:2 My brethren, ***count it all joy*** when ye fall into many afflictions; **1:3** Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. **1:4** But let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. **1:5** If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. **1:6** But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

How many people take joy in afflictions and trials? Probably not many, yet the Scripture from James states that we should take joy in our afflictions, which can only be accomplished if we have the peace of God within us, thereby through afflictions, we will achieve patience and through patience, perfection. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just; whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace *shall* be with you.²⁶” Thus, when we are lacking knowledge and we ask God in faith, He will both be with us and will grant unto us wisdom.

In Hebrews, chapter twelve, Paul wrote that trials, or in particular chastisement, are not usually pleasant in the moment, but yet we can receive comfort and consolation in the understanding “for whom the Lord *loveth* he *chasteneth*, and sourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?²⁷” In other words, even during our trials and afflictions we do learn that God loves us, and that because God loves us He allows us to experience tribulations. “Now no chastening for the present *seemeth* to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, *afterward* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.²⁸” Although it is painful to go through such trails, if we endure and press forward, we will draw nearer to God. Please read from 1 Peter 1:6-9 and Romans 5:1-6:

1:6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; **1:7** That the trial of your faith, being ***much more precious*** than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ; **1:8** Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with **joy unspeakable and full of glory**; **1:9** Receiving the object of your faith, even ***the salvation of your souls***.

5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; **5:2** By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. **5:3** And not only this, but we ***glory in tribulations*** also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; **5:4** And patience, experience; and experience, hope; **5:5** And hope

²⁶ Philippians 4:8-9

²⁷ Hebrews 12:6-7

²⁸ Hebrews 12:11-13

maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. **5:6** For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

Through our tribulations, we will learn patience and through patience, we will experience hope. The hope is that God is always with us and we do not need to be afraid because while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Mankind can also have hope in their salvation, which brings peace, comfort, and strength enough to endure all manner of afflictions and tribulations.

God is Love

In the twenty-second chapter of Genesis, the Lord commanded Abraham to offer up his son Isaac, whom he loved exceedingly. Thus, trusting in God, Abraham took two of his servants and his son and journeyed to the mountain that the Lord had designated, and on the third day of the journey, Abraham saw the place which God had told him to offer his sacrifice. Once there, Abraham commanded his two servants to stay with the mule while he took Isaac with him the rest of the way. Please read the following Scripture from Genesis 22:8-22:

22:8 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father! And he said, Here am I, my son. **22:9** And he said, Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? **22:10** And Abraham said, My son, ***God will provide himself a lamb*** for a burnt offering. So they went both of them together; and they came to the place of which God had told him.

22:11 And Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. **22:12** And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son. **22:13** And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham! Abraham! And Abraham said, Here am I.

22:14 And the angel said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; **22:15** For now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only Isaac from me. **22:16** And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind a thicket, **there was a ram caught in it by his horns.** **22:17** And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering, in the stead of his son.

22:19 And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, **22:20** Thus saith the Lord, I have sworn by myself, that because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only Isaac from me; **22:21** That in blessing I will bless thee; and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore.

God did not command Abraham to sacrifice his son in order to test his faith, but that the Lord could testify of Himself to Abraham and to us. For Abraham's testimony is a similitude of Jesus Christ and it helps to further illustrate and enlighten the love of God. What good and loving father would not rather give his own life in order to save his son? Therefore, how much more love must God have for His creation, to give His Only Begotten Son in order to save the world? This is the pure definition of love as

the life of His Son was more precious to Him than His own life and yet He still sent Jesus to suffer death on the cross so that the children of men might receive the joy of eternal life. In the sacrifice of His Son, God and Jesus Christ were separated for the very first time, as Jesus literally bore the sins of all mankind.

We hope that the reader has now come to a better understanding of the ways of God and has learned that God has prepared a way for all mankind to become humble and to come unto Him, not only through Jesus Christ, but also by giving unto men weaknesses and afflictions. In addition, through our trials and tribulations, mankind can grow in faith, patience, and hope. Please read the following Scripture passages from 1 John 4: 8-10 and 16-17:

4:8 He that loveth not, knoweth not God; ***for God is love.*** **4:9** In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. **4:10** Herein is love, **not that we loved God, but that he loved us**, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love ***dwelleth in God***, and God ***in him***. **4:17** Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world.

In this Scripture, we learn that God did not send His Son because we loved Him, but that despite our disobedience, He loved us. The Lord desires that we will respond to His love, which He has shown through Jesus Christ, by proclaiming as John did that “We love him, because he *first* loved us.²⁹” If we believe in Jesus, then we too can receive the pure love of God into our hearts and thereby we do have the promise that we will dwell in God and that He will dwell in us. Can the reader imagine a greater joy than this?

Why Does God Allow Evil in the World

The reader may feel within himself or herself that it does not seem fair that God would allow afflictions upon all men, even if it is to our benefit. “For they [our earthly fathers] verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he [God] for *our profit*, that we might be partakers of his holiness.³⁰” It is quite natural to ask why God sometimes allows the good people in the world to suffer such horrific tragedies, while those who do wickedly appear to be blessed. While we answer this question, it is again central to understand that all things to God are spiritual, and that our spiritual welfare is much more important to Him than our temporal or physical welfare.

It is also critical to understand that just because someone is wicked, does not necessarily mean that they will suffer hardships while in this life, remember that God chastens whom He loves. Similarly, just because someone is righteous, does not mean that they will experience a long and pleasurable life. For example, Jesus Christ is the only one who was completely innocent from birth, and yet as we read previously, “For, behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer, if they would repent; but if they would not repent, they must suffer even as I; which suffering caused myself,

²⁹ 1 John 4:19

³⁰ Hebrews 12:10

even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit, and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink.³¹ If Jesus Christ, the Son of God, did not experience a life void of pain and hardship, why do we feel that we should? Please read from Psalms 73:

73:3 For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the **prosperity of the wicked**. **73:4** For there are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm. **73:5** They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. **73:6** Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. **73:7** Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish. **73:8** They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily. **73:9** They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth... **73:12** Behold, these are the ungodly, ***who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.***

73:16 When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; **73:17** Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I ***their end.*** **73:18** Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction. **73:19** How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.

73:21 Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. **73:22** So **foolish was I, and ignorant**; I was as a beast before thee. **73:25** Whom have I in heaven ***but thee?*** and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. **73:26** My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. **73:27** For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish; thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. **73:28** But **it is good for me to draw near to God**; I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works.

We should not spend our whole time while in this life looking at what everyone else is doing, but we need to put our faith and trust in God and draw nearer unto Him. In Matthew, chapter five, Jesus told the disciples “for he [God] maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.³²” If we took two people, one righteous and one wicked, and placed them in the same storm, would the rain avoid the righteous individual while it still falls on the wicked one? Of course not, but instead because the righteous individual has faith in Jesus Christ, he or she will not be brought down into misery and woe, for they are filled with the peace and love of God. Please read the following Scripture from Helaman 2:74-74:

2:74 And now...remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation, that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds; yea, his shafts in the whirlwind; **2:75** Yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, ***it shall have no power over you,*** to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build, they can not fall.

³¹ DC 18:2h-i

³² Matthew 5:47

No matter what form of tribulation that we face in life, whether spiritual or temporal, if our foundation is built firmly on the rock of Jesus Christ, nothing can separate us from the love of God. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy [Jesus’s] sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.³³”

The reader will learn in **Chapter Thirteen** that God has created all things, even evil. Nonetheless, He did not create evil just for the sake of evil, but rather for His righteous purposes and for the great plan of happiness. In the ninth chapter of John, Jesus’s disciples saw a man who was blind from his birth and asked the Master, “Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, *Neither* hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be *made manifest* in him...When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and *came seeing*.³⁴”

After the blind man was healed, he boldly witnessed to the Pharisees of Jesus even before He knew that He was the Son of God. It was because of his trial of blindness that the man was able to receive a powerful testimony concerning Jesus Christ, which not only brought him joy while in this life but most importantly established him to receive the greatest joy of eternal life. It is important to understand that God meant for mankind to know joy, which is a spiritual experience unlike pleasure, while we are on this earth. However, in order to know the joy of our redemption, we must experience opposition.

Eve said in Genesis, chapter four, “Were it not for our transgression, we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.³⁵” We know that Adam and Eve were separated from the presence of God to live in a world filled with misery and woe because of their transgression in the garden. Yet it was because of their transgression that they were able to know and experience the absolute joy of their redemption, for “Herein is love, not that we loved God, *but that he loved us*, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Wherefore, through repentance and baptism, God has prepared a way for mankind to inherit the Kingdom of God. [Baptism was covered in **Chapter Two**]

Jesus Christ said that all men will appear before the judgment seat of God to be judged according to their works, whether they be good, or whether they be evil, and in this we can receive comfort, for God is truly a God of justice and mercy. Although much evil has been done in the world because of mankind’s wicked choices, and though many righteous people have suffered more than we can imagine, the Lord has promised that He will receive them “unto himself, in glory.³⁶” While those individuals that

³³ Romans 8:35-39

³⁴ John 9:2-3 and 6-7

³⁵ Genesis 4:11

³⁶ Alma 10:45-54

commit this great evil “he [God] doth suffer that they may do this thing, or that the people may do this thing unto them, according to the hardness of their hearts, that the judgments which he shall exercise upon them in his wrath, may be just; and the blood of the innocent shall stand as a witness against them, yea, and cry mightily against them at the last day.³⁷” Remember, that God will never take away mankind’s agency, we have every ability to do that which is righteous, or to do that which is evil.

Conclusion

As the reader has examined this chapter, it is our prayer and hope that they have come away with a greater knowledge of God’s ways. In addition, we hope that the question of why God allows evil things to occur in the world has sufficiently been answered, and that your mind and soul has been edified. From the Scriptures, we can read of God’s love for us and how truly great that love is.

In Genesis, the reader learned that God weeps for His creation because He is unable to bear our choices that keep us in misery and woe and eternally separated from God’s presence. God’s greatest wish for us is that we would choose Him and partake of the joy of eternal life and salvation, in which He freely gives. Furthermore, we have read that God’s work and glory is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

It is vital for the reader to note that God loves mankind so much, that He gave unto us our agency and prepared a way for us to come unto Him. One of the ways in which God has prepared for us, is weakness. Through weakness, depending upon our response, we can become humble and exercise our faith in Jesus Christ so that when those trials do come, we will be founded on the rock. Moreover, we will discover that those trials are so much more precious than anything the world has to offer, for it is through our trials that we can understand how much God loves each and every soul.

We pray that if the reader has any questions or doubts concerning this work that they would seek out God in prayer and that they would search the Scriptures diligently, as to learn of these things for themselves. Thank you and God bless.

³⁷ Alma 10:51-52