
Turn Back the Battle: Isaiah Speaks to Christians Today
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Chapter 4
Inquire of the Lord of hosts
Isaiah 9:13

Questions for discussion and reflection

1. Can you, with hindsight, see how some of your worst trials have actually resulted in great blessings, such as spiritual growth and sanctification (making you more like Jesus) and/or powerful, effective gospel witness?

Write down one such case as a testimony to how God can and does redeem our trials and sufferings.
(If in a group: share your testimony.)

2. If God can and does redeem trials and sufferings for positive ends, then what should be our first response when we are confronted with trials, suffering, threats and persecution?

Why?

Why do we frequently fail to do this?

3. When we are afflicted, perplexed, persecuted and struck down specifically because of our faith -- specifically on account of the name of Jesus (John 15:18-21) -- we manifest the death of Christ in our bodies before the watching world in what is a powerful form of cultural criticism. And just as Christ's wounds give life, so too can ours!
(2 Corinthians 4:7-12)

Does this Biblical reality help you think differently about the suffering of persecution? Explain.

4. List some of the blessings that can arise out of the evil of persecution?

Prayer: *Lord, redeem my suffering.*

Dear God my Father,

You are sovereign over all creation and know the end from the beginning. (Isaiah 46:9-10)

You can do all things and no purpose of yours can be thwarted. (Job 24:2)

You will fulfill your purpose for me. (Psalm 138:8a)

I praise you O Lord, for you are a redeeming God
who takes what has been ruined by sin and the devil
and redeems it for the sanctification of your people,
for witness to the world,
and for the glory of your name.

Forgive me for the times I have failed to trust you with my trials and sufferings.

Forgive me for the times I have responded badly to suffering, persecution and affliction
by going on the defensive when you have been standing at the ready
eager to work in and through me
to advance your truth,
build your kingdom,
and achieve great victories
on earth and in heaven.

I have missed so many opportunities to grow in faith;
to witness to your grace,
and to glorify your holy name.

Father, for this I am truly sorry.

May your Holy Spirit impart to me spiritual wisdom and insight,
so that I might discern your hand, recognise your redemptive work
and get on board to facilitate rather than frustrate
your divine will and purpose.

Increase my faith Lord,
that I might have that peace and rest that comes from faith.
May I have faith to give you, and trust you
with my anxieties (1Peter 5:7) and my burdens (Matthew 11:28).
May I have faith to confidently trust that you are always in control.
May I have faith for assurance that you are working all things for good
according to your divine will and purpose. (Romans 8:28)

Use me for your glory and bless me,
not according to the measure of the world,
but as determined by your perfect wisdom and your everlasting love.

I commit my body and my life to you as a living sacrifice. (Romans 12:1-2)

In God I trust.

Amen.