

WHEN AND IF

“When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if my people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive them their sin and heal their land.” 2 Chronicles 7:13,14

God disciplines His people in various ways when they turn away from Him and do evil. It is not something He loves to do, but something He does in love for the purpose of turning their hearts back to Him. To a people who depend on the land for food for themselves and their livestock, rain is a big deal. With no rain and devouring locusts God is able to get their attention.

Not every negative thing that happens to us is from God, but it would be wise to seek the Lord about it just the same. It would also be wise for us to be sure we are walking humbly before Him.

Sometimes the Lord has to get our attention with painful circumstances, but it is always done with the heart to redeem us to Himself. When you encounter pain and suffering it may be due to one of several reasons. Perhaps the Lord has allowed Satan to buffet you and you have done nothing wrong! Take Job for example. The Lord allowed Satan to severely afflict him and Job never fully knew why he was going through all his pain. Perhaps there is some level of correction God is bringing to shape and form you. Still another reason may be due to the fallen world in which we live, where there is pain, sickness, and hardship in the natural. One of the main reasons we suffer is due to the poor decisions we make in life - mistakes, or even sin. When the blessings stop and the pain begins it is time to pray and seek the Lord. Perhaps you are going through something now. Ask the Lord for wisdom about it. He will answer.

Be careful not to be quick to judge another when they encounter difficulty in life. It's easy to point fingers and assume the person we're judging should have done this or should have done that. Yet we do not see all, nor know all - only God sees and knows all. Trouble does not necessarily point to sin or failure. Paul was doing everything right but he still suffered shipwreck, beatings, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness to name a few.

As a leader it is important to teach people the value of God's discipline in our lives. Take this next week and study about how and why God disciplines us according to Hebrews 12, then prepare to share it with your fellow disciples.