

The Lord Is With You

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By Lenny Cacchio

LEE'S SUMMIT, Mo.—The nation of Israel was going through one of those calamities that struck it from time to time. Marauding tribes invaded the land, stealing crops and livestock, terrorizing the people and impoverishing the nation to the point of despair. It didn't help that they had not only ignored their God but had blatantly taken to serving other gods.

That's why it sounded like an odd comment when the Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and said, "The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!" (Judges 6:12).

I know many people, faithful people, who are living through trials that are hard to endure. Many of these involve serious health problems. Others are dire financial problems.

Some are having difficulties finding employment, or are being abused by their present employers. Family difficulties sometimes are a part of the mix.

I even know some who are afflicted by all of these trials at the same time. If the Angel of the Lord were to approach them and say, "The LORD is with you," as he did with Gideon, one could forgive them if they were to answer as Gideon did:

"If the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us." (Judges 6:13, NIV).

One of the most difficult theological questions to address is this very question: If the Lord is for us, then why has all this happened to us?

Clearly, there is not an easy answer to this question, nor does any one answer address every situation. We know that in Gideon's case the nation had drifted from God and for that reason God gradually withdrew His protection from the nation's enemies, and we also know that God responded when they cried out for deliverance.

But we also know that the righteous really do suffer, and sometimes in the very presence of the wicked who are prospering. Scripture itself acknowledges such (Psalm 73; Job).

This question of why the righteous suffer can be addressed in many ways, including that classic passage from Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:1-7, where we learn that the trials we face sometimes come our way so we can better comfort others when they face such trials. Sometimes we suffer because of the natural order of this sin-laden and decaying world. Sometimes we suffer because we are reaping consequences of our own or others' mistakes.

Regardless of the cause of our suffering, Gideon's comments intrigue me. The man was open enough to be honest about his doubts, even expressing his doubts and frustrations to God's direct messenger.

Are you confident enough in your relationship with God to be this open and direct?

"If the Lord is with me, then why is my wife perpetually sick? Why am I always running behind on my bills, and why is it so hard to find work? If the Lord is with me, why does the car break down at the most inopportune times? Why do we have family troubles? I know it rains on both the just and the unjust, but sometimes I get too much rain and sometimes not enough while old Joe across the street who cusses up a storm and has no interest in his God whatsoever seems to be doing just fine."

Would you have the nerve to question God in this way? Gideon did. And God didn't condemn him for it. Instead he walked Gideon through his doubts and discouragement, showing that the Lord really was with him and that he really was a mighty man of valor.

If life is handing you circumstances that cause doubt, ask the question. Persevere in your asking until you have the answer (Luke 11:8-13). You will learn something about yourself that you didn't know, but, more important, you'll learn that God is who He says He is.