

God's response to Satan's challenge was to display His utter unselfishness by sending His own Son to earth to live as one of us and to die for us on the cross.

Now, you and I must choose between God and Satan. And in order to counter Satan's accusation that God forces us to follow Him by His superior power, God must make sure that the choice we make is our own—that it's honest and freely chosen. That's why our freedom to choose is so important to God. But it is also the source of God's problem. Because if we can freely choose, then we can choose evil; we can choose to do terrible things to each other.

### **The abuse of freedom**

It shouldn't surprise us, then, that some people choose to do evil. That pain and suffering result. When a young mother dies of cancer, when a marriage breaks up, when a car crash kills a child—when you're hurting for whatever reason—it says that Satan is still fighting God and that sometimes Satan wins a battle.

However, the Bible assures us that in the end God will win the war. The book of Revelation

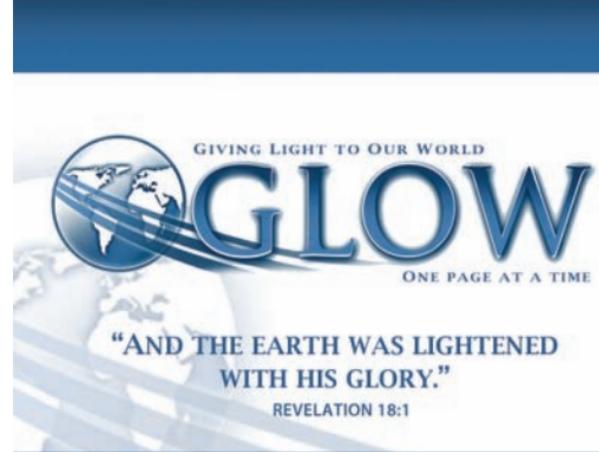
describes this in a word picture of Jesus riding on a white horse at the head of heaven's armies. Billions and billions of holy angels follow Him. His patience with Satan's evil has reached its limit.

The battle is short. Satan and all his evil followers are captured. The destruction of evil will be complete when Satan is destroyed. It will be the end of hatred, violence, terrorism, genocide, and homicide. It will be the end of all the hurtful, sad things, large and small, that Satan has caused us to suffer.

### **No more pain**

The Bible promises that sin will never rise up again (see Nahum 1:9). It says that God will make everything new—including us: " 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away' " (Revelation 21:4).

Does God care that you're hurting? Indeed He does. Is He going to do something about it? Indeed He is—both for the big picture and for you personally. He promises, " 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you' " (Hebrews 13:5).



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"AND THE EARTH WAS LIGHTENED  
WITH HIS GLORY."  
REVELATION 18:1

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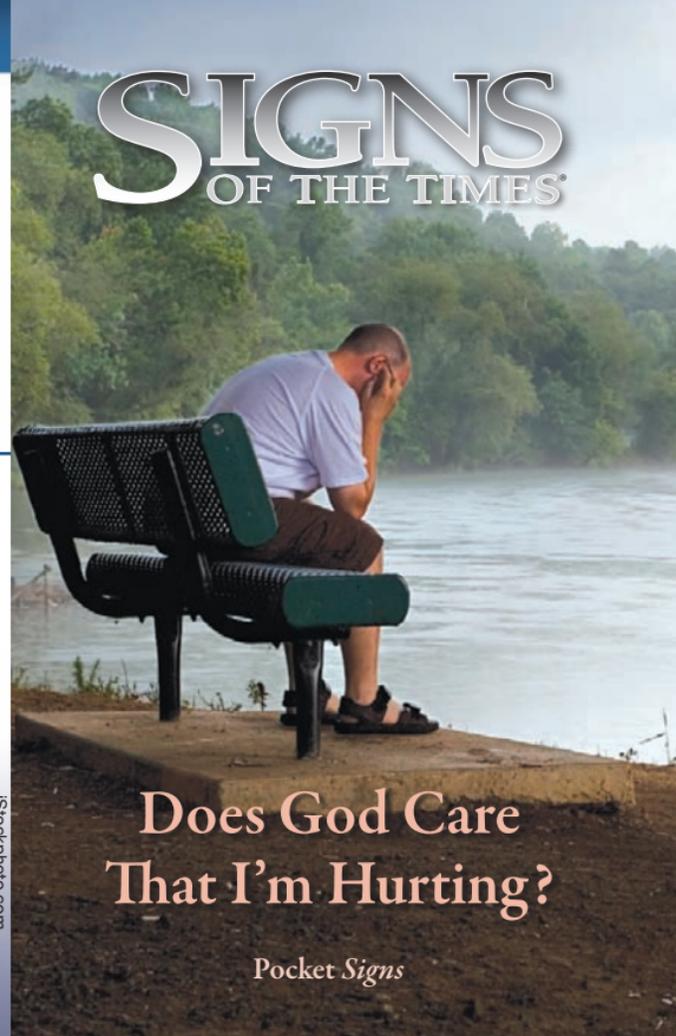
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# SIGNS OF THE TIMES

## Does God Care That I'm Hurting?

Pocket Signs

### Does God Care That I'm Hurting?

We live in a world where terrible things happen to people who don't deserve it. Hurricane Katrina slams ashore near New Orleans, breaking levees—and thousands die; hundreds of thousands are without shelter or drinking water. Homes and possessions are swept away. Or suffering may take on more “everyday” forms—a sudden disease, an accident, a divorce, the death of a spouse or a child. Whatever the reason, we instinctively cry out when we're hurt. We want to know, Why? Why me? Does God know—or care—when I'm hurting?

Even Jesus had a similar question when He was here on earth. “My God, my God,” He cried out as He hung on the cross, “why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34). He wondered if His Father knew—and cared—that He was hurting so terribly. The Bible describes Jesus as “a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering” (Isaiah 53:3).

### God is close—even when you're hurting

You may not find it easy to believe right now when the hurt is so painful, but God does know

all about it. And He cares. He's very close, even when He seems far away. We know this is true because Jesus promised, “I am with you always, even to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). God is with you when you're hurting. He says, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you” (Isaiah 43:2). God is there in our worst trials and hurts.

But if that's true, why doesn't He do something about it? Why doesn't He make the hurting go away?

First of all, how do you know He isn't doing something about it? How do you know that your situation wouldn't be much worse than it is—except for God's intervention? We live in a world in which evil is a reality. The Bible says that this evil is the direct result of Satan, who is engaged in a life-or-death struggle against God. But a word picture in the Bible shows us that God is restraining this evil—holding it back from doing its worst. The book of Revelation pictures four angels holding back the four winds of the earth, and an angel from heaven urges them, “Do not let loose these winds to harm the earth.” The

message is that God is protecting us from the worst effects of Satan's desire to harm us.

### God's dilemma

Second, God has a problem. You see, we live in a world in which evil is a terrible reality. Satan is locked in a great struggle against God and goodness. He is trying to destroy us and everything that causes happiness. God is stronger than Satan, and He will finally win this struggle. Sin and evil and suffering will be totally eradicated from the earth and from the entire universe—someday. But meanwhile, Satan has the power to cause pain and hurt and death.

God's problem is this: How to overcome Satan in such a way that you and I will have the ability to choose sides freely? You see, our freedom to choose—either good or evil—is a fundamental freedom that God must preserve at all costs. If we don't choose to be on God's side because we freely want to make that choice, then Satan has won. He accused God in the beginning of being dictatorial and arbitrary in demanding obedience. He set himself up as the alternative to God.

### Why me?

It's natural to ask, “Why me?” when pain and trouble come into your life. It often seems so unfair. Why do some people's lives seem so pain-free, while terrible things happen to others? In the same accident, some will walk away unhurt, while others lose their lives. Why? Why does God seemingly work a miracle for some—but not for others?

Totally satisfying answers to such questions don't exist. We must remember, however, that in the end, the power of miracles—and the reasons for them—remain in God's hands, and God's alone. He sees the big picture, and He will make all things right. Says one Bible writer, “God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few” (Ecclesiastes 5:2).

Faced with such circumstances, we must trust that God knows the answers, even if we do not, and that we will not know until we can ask Him face to face in heaven. We can only believe that when all the accounts of life on this earth are settled—when we look back at this earth from the shores of heaven—we'll be satisfied that “our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).