

TRUSTING GOD WHEN LIFE HURTS

Philippians 4:21-23

7/29/03

All of us experience adversity at different times and in varying degrees throughout our lives.

Losing a job

An auto accident

A miscarriage

A rebellious son or daughter

An unfair college professor

An unhappy marriage

Dashed hopes and unfulfilled dreams

A business turned sour

The sting of injustice

The humiliation of rejection

The dull ache of loneliness

A demotion at work

Personal failures that are your own fault

Physical infirmities that will never change

Cancer

When confronting these things we struggle with questions such as:

Does God actually control the circumstances of my lives, or do “bad” things just happen to us because we live in a sin-cursed world?

If God really does control the circumstances in our lives, why did He allow this to happen?

Can I really trust God?

Adversity is difficult even when we know God is in control of our circumstances.

In fact, knowledge sometimes tends to aggravate the pain.

If God is in control, why did He allow this to happen?

1. The Example Of Paul 4:22

Paul's years of suffering and imprisonment

- suffering stonings, beatings, and imprisonment.
- ♦ 2 years in Caesarea and now in Rome

v. 22 Jerome stated that Paul converted many in Caesar's family.

- cf 1:13

Josephus states that the Empress Poppaea was favorably inclined to Christianity and a worshiper of the true God.

God is in control of what is happening in Paul's life..

- Paul's enemies wanted him killed to stop him from preaching the gospel. Little did they expect that they were fulfilling God's plan for spreading of the gospel into the highest circles of the Roman Empire.
- **Psalm 33:10-11** The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. 11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation.
- **Proverbs 19:21** Many plans are in a man's heart, But the counsel of the LORD will stand.
- **Proverbs 21:1** The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.
- **John Newton. Bridges: TRUSTING GOD p. 79**

God was in control in all that happened to Jesus.

- Caesar Augustus didn't realize he was fulfilling the will of God when he issued the decree for the census to be taken that caused Mary and Joseph to go to Bethlehem where the Christ was prophesied to be born.
- Herod and Pontius Pilate didn't realize when they conspired against Jesus that they were fulfilling the plan of God.

- ♦ **John 19:10-11** So Pilate said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" 11 Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above
- ♦ **Acts 2:23** this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.
- ♦ **Acts 4:27-28** "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

In the same way God is in control of all that happens in your life.

- God is completely sovereign. God is infinitely wise. God is perfectly loving.
 - ♦ His love always wills what is best for you.
 - ♦ His wisdom always knows what is best for you.
 - ♦ His sovereignty always has the power to do what is best for you.

2. The Sovereignty Of God

a. God is in complete control. Lamentations 3:37-38

- **Lamentations 3:37-38** Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, Unless the Lord has commanded *it*? 38 *Is it* not from the mouth of the Most High That both good and ill go forth?
- **Proverbs 21:31** The horse is prepared for the day of battle, But victory belongs to the LORD.

- **Proverbs 16:33** The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD
 - ◆ cf 1 Chron 24:5; Esther 3:7;
- **Augustine:** Nothing . . . happens unless the Omnipotent wills it to happen: he either permits it to happen, or he brings it about himself.
 - ◆ No ruler, boss, supervisor, teacher, or coach can speak and have it happen if the Lord has not decreed or permitted it to happen.
- What an encouragement and stimulus to trust God!!
 - ◆ Is somebody out to get you? Nothing can happen unless God first permits it.
 - ◇ God is in control, but in His control He allows us to experience real pain. We hurt, we suffer. But in the midst of our suffering we must remember that God is in control; that He is sovereign.
 - ◆ God never wastes pain. He always uses it to accomplish His purpose for our good and His glory.
 - ◇ **Margaret Clarkson pp. 39-40**
 - ◆ Neither willful malicious acts nor the unintended mistakes of people can thwart God's purpose for us.
- Your times are in His hands.
 - ◆ Your promotion or lack of it is in the hand of God.
 - ◇ Your superiors are His agents to carry out His will.
- God is in control over the events in our lives.
 - ◆ Including the difficult things

◇ **Ecclesiastes 7:14b** In the day of prosperity be happy, But in the day of adversity consider -- God has made the one as well as the other

◇ **Genesis 45:8** "Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God;

◆ Even Satan must have permission to touch God's people. Job 1:12; 2:6; Luke 22:31-32

b. God is perfectly loving. Lamentations 3:32-33

- **Lamentations 3:32-33** For if He causes grief, Then He will have compassion According to His abundant lovingkindness. 33 For He does not afflict willingly Or grieve the sons of men.
- **Jeremiah 29:11** 'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.
- **Isaiah 54:10** "For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, And My covenant of peace will not be shaken," Says the LORD who has compassion on you.

c. God is infinitely wise. Romans 11:33

- His plans are frequently beyond our ability to fathom and understanding
 - ◆ **Deuteronomy 29:29** "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.
 - ◆ **Isa 55:8-9**
 - ◆ **Proverbs 3:5-6**
 - ◆ **Romans 11:33** Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

- We must learn to trust when we don't understand
- We must remember that God uses hard times for our best.
- God uses adversity to develop holiness.

♦ **Romans 8:28-29**

- ♦ **Hebrews 12:10-11** For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness. 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

d. When facing difficult times we must remember:

1. God is in control.

- ♦ Our first response should be one of trust.
 - ◇ Our careers and destinies are in His hands; not the hands of the boss.
 - ◇ This confidence should keep us from becoming resentful or bitter when we are treated unjustly.
- ♦ God may allow people to treat us unjustly, but He never allows people to undermine His plan for us.

2. God loves me.

- ♦ **Romans 8:31b-32** If God is for us, who can be against us. 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

3. God is working out all the circumstances in my life for my ultimate good. Romans 8:28

- ♦ This has a purpose.
- ♦ God works through adversity to develop spiritual muscle and character in our lives.

- ◇ He teaches us, prunes us, and develops holiness in us through difficult times.
- ◇ He teaches us dependence and perseverance. John 15:5; James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-4
- ◇ He equips us for service. 2 Cor 1:4

4. We are to pray. cf 4:6-7; Acts 4:24,28-29

◆ Craig Bosley

- ◇ The knowledge of God's sovereignty is meant to be an encouragement to pray, not an excuse to lapse into some sort of pious fatalism.
- ◆ **Acts 4:24, 28-29** And when they heard *this*, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM . . . 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. 29 "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence,
- ◇ The disciples believed in the sovereignty of God.
- ◇ It was their belief in the sovereignty of God that compelled them to pray.
- ◇ A sovereign God has invited us to pray and has the ability to answer prayer.
- ◇ God's sovereignty does not negate our responsibility to pray, but rather makes it possible for us to pray with confidence.
- ◆ Prayer is our acknowledgment of God's sovereignty and dependence upon Him to act on our behalf.
- ◆ **Daniel 9- Neither God's sovereignty nor His promise to restore the exiles caused Daniel to lapse into a fatalistic, do-nothing attitude.**

5. We need to act prudently.

- ♦ David was confident that God would fulfill His purpose in him, yet David took precautions to avoid being killed by Saul.

♦ He did not presume upon God's sovereignty.

**6. Remember that this too will pass. 1 Cor 10:13;
Romans 8:31-32**

7. Remember that this is not characteristic of my real home. Phil 3:20

- ♦ **Romans 8:18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

8. In faith give thanks. 1 Thessalonians 5:18

When in the midst of suffering we should ask, "How can I then honor God in this?"

3. The Importance Of Fellowship 4:21 cf Hebrews 10:24-25

4. The Grace Of Our Lord Jesus Christ 4:23

Hebrews 13:5

Ephesians 2:8-9

Romans 11:6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.