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Wednesday Evening Family Devotional – 3/25/20

All Things for Good

*“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God”
Romans 8:28*

When everything goes well for us, it is easy to quote this verse. When we see other people going through trying times, this verse almost naturally comes out of our mouths. We want the hurting brother to have biblical assurance that God has a special design in His suffering; therefore we point him/her to this verse and try to pass along the comfort it gives. The bigger challenge comes when the problems apply to us. If our troubles are severe enough, our minds have difficulty accepting the comforting assurance of Scripture – and even this verse doesn’t hold the answer we really want!

Our interest when going through difficulties is to get rid of them! We want a “clean slate.” If we’re in financial need, we want money to pay the bills. If we’re in a struggle to figure out a problem, we want the answer to pop into our minds. If we’re sick, we want instant healing. Seldom do we settle our minds in the reality that our current difficulties are a means God is using to refine us or to work out a special plan that you and I cannot see. And even if we do realize that God has a good goal in our sufferings, we still want the problems to expire right now. But reality tells us that problems don’t go away when we want them to – in fact, sometimes we will live with them for the rest of our lives.

When the Apostle Paul experience some unexplained physical limitation (which was quite severe) he had the same thoughts you and I have (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). He saw the ailment as a major interruption and limitation to his life and plans. What made it all the more trying was that somehow he knew that this impediment was an action of the enemy, the “messenger of

Satan” (a messenger that came from Satan). Yet, at the same time, the problem was similar to that of Job: God was the One that gave it (“was given to me”).

He understood that he could accomplish more physically (and probably emotionally) if he could have the problems wiped out. It was natural for him to dislike what he experienced, so he presented the issue to God. He tells us that he pleaded with the Lord three different times about removing it. But God chose to not remove it! Instead, God wanted Paul to have more divine grace than he would have had without the problem. God told him that the grace he will receive from God while he experiences this problem will have two special benefits: first, it will enable him to deal with it; second, it will achieve strength in his life.

Many of us would probably respond, “But I wouldn’t need enablement to deal with it if I didn’t have it! And why not simply strengthen me as I am?” But the apostle did not see it this way. As despised as this thorn was, he listened to the Lord and understood a couple of facts:

- First he understood that if God allows something to remain (even something unpleasant) then we can receive it and endure it with pleasure (“most gladly, therefore”), knowing that all things work together for good to them that love God.
- Second, he understood that that since God wanted this in his life, he would rejoice over the ailment (“glory in my infirmity”) because it would advance him to receive Divine power (the power of Christ), and this power would come and take residence on him. This means that as long as he experiences the difficulty, God’s power stays with him!

It is possible for a believer to become so self-sufficient that we think we can get through life and accomplish ministry by our natural abilities. Some of us can even boast in our good, spiritual upbringing or biblical training and assume we’ve “arrived.” Either way, we trust in ourselves or in our status and are so satisfied with our physical or spiritual condition that we will lose sight of the Lord. This will result in spiritual poverty; weakness. But God would have us “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” So what happens to make us strong? Contrary to our way of thinking, sometimes God will send physical, emotional, or other types of limitations that will completely halt our reliance on self and cause us to turn to Him.

Is this a good thing? Our natural way of thinking may not conclude that it is good; but we “know that all things work together for good to them that love

God.” This means that “all” trials and troubles we face “work together for good.” These things are now in the process of working together with God for a divinely positive purpose. God uses all these things for a positive outcome in the present and in the eternal state of things. And while the rest of the world cannot see this, believers are assured of it because all things work this way for us: “To those who love God.”

There is no situation you or I can face that is meant for evil or that will take us in a direction outside of the best way. What we perceive as best and what God knows to be best are often two different things. Some of life’s changes are mysterious and unexplainable; we can’t figure out God’s ways. Yet, with all of the unexpected twists and turns of life, we can have confidence in two great truths:

- God’s absolute trustworthiness guarantees that He will only do what is right and what is best.
- God’s indescribable love for His dear children confirms that He only allows or sends those things which are intended for good.

Romans 8:26-39

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.