

It Is Good

Psalm 73:25-28



Rock Hill Baptist Church
605 Rock Hill Road
Lexington, Tennessee 38351

Pastor David Buffaloe
731-845-6104
online at bibleteacher.org

FOCAL Psalms 73:25-28 Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. (26) My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. (27) For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. (28) But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.

Why does God allow pain to exist in humanity? Why do we, at times, suffer so? Why does it seem that so many on this earth have so many earthly possessions, and yet the dedicated follower of Christ seems to have so little? Why do God's people have times of pain, loss, loneliness, and even despair?

These questions are perhaps some that you have asked in your quiet times. All of us have asked God "why" many times in our lives. Why does God allow His people to experience pain? The Psalmist asked this question, the prophets of old asked this question, the Apostles asked this question - what does our Father answer?

1. God Allows Trials So I Will Draw Near To Him

The most interesting news we have heard lately hasn't been who's marrying who or who's having who's baby in Hollywood. The most interesting news to me has been the recent "scientific discovery" that Pluto isn't really a planet. On August 24, 2006 **MSNBC** reported:

“Capping years of intense debate, astronomers resolved Thursday to demote Pluto in a wholesale redefinition of planethood that is being billed as a victory of scientific reasoning over historic and cultural influences. But the decision is already being hotly debated. Officially, Pluto is no longer a planet. “Pluto is dead,” said Mike Brown, a planetary scientist at the California Institute of Technology who spoke with reporters via a teleconference while monitoring the vote. The decision also means a Pluto-sized object that Brown discovered will not be called a planet.”¹

So what we knew in school has been redefined by “scientists” - Pluto is no longer a planet. What this has proved to me is this – Scientists are not God. The same scientists who knew all things, who knew that God doesn't exist, are the same scientists that consider Pluto no longer a planet. Ironic, isn't it?

Human knowledge is so frail when we compare what we know with what we *think* we know. God's universe is immense. We look at it, are awed by it, study it, but in the final analysis all we can do is *trust God and God alone*. The Psalmist reached this conclusion when he said:

FOCAL Psalms 73:26 **Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.**

I can have all the knowledge available to man (and with

¹ <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/14489259/>

the Internet, most of the world's information is at our fingertips) – but if I do not possess a knowledgeable *relationship with God, I have nothing*. A person may have everything in the world, every possession, every dollar, every friend, every bit of good health - but if he doesn't have God then he has *nothing*. He is poorer than the poorest beggar in India! But if a person has absolutely nothing - no possessions, no friends, bad health - and yet has God, then that person is the *riches person on earth*. To have God as your Friend and as your Savior is the most immense thing in the world.

Do you know God deeply? Do you *desire God* above all else? The Psalmist had gone through great suffering in his life, and had finally learned that the secret of happiness was *not possessions* which rot, nor *human interactions* which bring temporary joy. No Beloved, the *greatest joy in life* is to know God *through* suffering, to learn that He is faithful no matter what your circumstances are in life. **John Piper** writes:²

“The pearl of greatest price is the glory of Christ. Thus Paul stresses that in our sufferings the glory of Christ's all-sufficient grace is magnified. If we rely on him in our calamity, and he sustains our “rejoicing in hope,” then he is shown to be the all-satisfying God of grace and strength that he is. If we hold fast to him “when all around our soul gives way,” then we show that he is more to be desired than all we have lost. Christ said to the suffering apostle, “My grace is sufficient for you, for [my] power is perfected in weakness.” Paul responded to this:

² In *Desiring God*, Chapter 10

"Gladly, then, I will boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). So suffering clearly is designed by God not only as a way to wean Christians off of self and onto grace, but also as a way to spotlight that grace and make it shine. That is precisely what faith does; it magnifies Christ's future grace.

The deep things of life in God are discovered in suffering. So it was with Jesus himself. "Although he was a Son, Jesus learned obedience through what he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). The same book where we read this also tells us Jesus never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). So "learning obedience" does not mean switching from disobedience to obedience. It means growing deeper and deeper with God in the experience of obedience. It means experiencing depths of yieldedness to God that would not have been otherwise demanded."

God allows suffering in the Christian life so we can learn that God alone satisfies our desires. It is the wise Christian who can honestly say to God, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee". Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

Matthew 6:19-21 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves

break through and steal: (20) But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: (21) For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Is your treasure in Heaven, dear one, or is it upon the earth? If you lost everything you owned today, all possessions, all health, all of this temporal world – would you be able to say **my desire is God and God alone**. I guarantee you this: if your desire is on the earth, if your desire is on the temporary, if your vision is on *now* and you do not see things *through the eyes of eternity* – then sooner or later you will be in for a great fall!

God wants you as focused on Him as He is on you. What you have been given, dear Christian, are things that you should be using to *serve the Lord Who saved you, who laid down His life for you*. Our Lord Jesus said:

John 15:13-15 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (14) Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. (15) Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made

known unto you.

Jesus Christ laid down His life for us on Calvary, and He expects us to lay down our lives for Him. If you are saved – and I pray that you are – you are only saved because you *surrendered all of your life to God*. There came a point in your earthly existence when you surrendered *all idols, all treasures, all things* and came to the Lord on bended knee. On that day you entered into a growing relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

God laid His life down for you when He was nailed to that Cross. If you are His friend, if you find that **God is your desire**, then you *must* lay down your life for Him daily.

God uses pain to draw the eyes of man upward to where He is. The Bible says:

Job 33:14-17 For God speaketh once, ye twice, yet man perceiveth it not. (15) In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; (16) Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, (17) That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man.

God uses pain and loss in the life of the believer to *refocus* us. When life is good, when we are on the mountaintop, when our health is best, we are often focused more on life than we are on *eternity*. We often

ignore our Friend Jesus and focus on today, tomorrow, and the next day. We make plans, we decide what we are going to do with our lives, we think we know so much. When pain and trials come we quickly run to the arms of the Master. Like the Prodigal Son we see the Father standing in the distance waiting for us to return to His embrace. Our desire is turned from the things of this life so that we cry out to God, **"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."**

Father Abraham was called **the Friend of God**:

James 2:23 ... Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

How did Abraham become **the friend of God**? First **Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness**. An unbeliever can never be a friend of God – you must first be saved. But this alone did not make Abraham a *friend of God*. No, dear friends – Abraham made it a point to *follow God* even when that following invoked suffering. Abraham looked at things with **the eyes of God**. While Lot chose the greener pastures and the bright lights of the city, Abraham chose the same path that God chose. As we are told in Scripture:

Hebrews 11:13, 16 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of

them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ... (16) But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

When a trial comes upon you, dear One, rather than thrash against that trial why not do as Abraham did? Look to God, draw near to Him, and ask Him to reveal His deeper purposes in that trial. Which brings us to point number two:

2. God Allows Trials So That My Strength Will Be In Him Alone

FOCAL Psalms 73:26 **My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion³ forever.**

The Psalmist says, **my heart and my flesh faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.** The word **portion** is a Hebrew word which means **an inheritance**. The Psalmist saw his body failing him, saw his strength and **heart** (inner man) dying, but rallied when he realized that **his relationship with God is his inheritance for all eternity**. This is an awesome

³ H2506, חֵלֶק, *chêleq, khay'-lek*, From H2505; properly *smoothness* (of the tongue); also an *allotment*: - flattery, inheritance, part, X partake, portion.

concept, and one that we need to explore. The commentator **Matthew Henry** said:

"... **Those who have God for their Inheritance and their Portion for ever, ought to look with holy contempt and indifference upon the possessions of this world. ...**"

Why do Christians get sick – why do we suffer in the same way that unbelievers suffer? Because God our Father wants to draw our attention to Him, to make us understand that our focus should be on Him and Him alone. God allows suffering at time so that His glory can be made manifest. Though I love my mother, the times I loved her most was when I was sick. I would be hot with fever, nauseated, feeling bad, and momma would come in and make me feel better. God does this with His believers when we are ill. We see His faithfulness, feel His presence to a greater degree while we are sick.

What a glorious thing when you can internalize the great truth - **God is my portion!** This is **My Eternal Father** who goes through my suffering with me, blessed be His Name forever. The **Apostle Paul** understood this principle when he said:

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory

in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (10) Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

What an amazing statement to *glory in infirmities*! Have you *glorified God in your sicknesses*, or do you, like **Job's wife suggested, "Curse God and die"**? Sickness is a time when the believer should focus on the promises of God's Word. If you are **redeemed**:

1 Peter 1:18-20 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; (19) But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: ...

Then you are precious in the sight of God. Will He abandon the child that He purchased at such a great price now that you are in your hour of affliction? No, dear One, absolutely not! You are an **adopted son of God (Galatians 4:4-6), indwelt by God the Holy Spirit (Galatians 4:7)** – do you think that God would abandon His own? Such blasphemous thoughts! Has He not said:

1 Peter 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, (5) Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

If you are in Christ - if you have been *redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb, adopted into the family of God* - then you need not fear that you will not receive your inheritance. God is your portion. Though **Jacob deceived blind Isaac, and took the double portion from his brother Esau by deceit, God is not blind nor is His hand shortened**. Your inheritance is in God, and you shall receive your portion one day when you stand before Him in glory.

FOCAL Psalms 73:27 For, lo, **they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.**

The unbeliever perishes, for the unbeliever chases after the things of this world while ignoring God our Father. We, on the other hand, draw near to God, not toward Satan. **Alexander MacClaren** said⁴:

4 from his sermon, *Nearness to God the Key To Life's Puzzle*

"It is good for me to draw near to God because, unless I do ... my true self is dead even while I seem to live. All that are parted from Him perish; all that are joined to Him, and only they, do live what is worth calling life. **Cut off the sunbeam from the sun, and what becomes of it? It vanishes. Separate a soul from God, and it is dead. What is all the good of the world to you if your true self is dead?** And what absurdity it is to deck a corpse with riches and pomp of various kinds!"

Though corruption may flow through me, I do not fear. As I become weaker, God becomes stronger in me. Ah, but I welcome the end of this life and the end of what all men chase after if God only flow through me.

3. What Can I Do To Honor My Lord?

FOCAL Psalms 73:28 **But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.**

What **good thing** can I do to honor my Savior and Lord? What **good** can I do in this life? Sometimes we feel that we are useless because our bodies fail us. We feel that we are of no use to man nor God. What good can I do when all that I know - even my own body - has turned against me?

a. Draw near to God in repentant and humble love:

The Psalmist said, **it is good for me to draw near to God.** This is a good that stands, because it is a good that God wills. **God wills that you draw near to Him.** He told us through the Prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 57:15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

All pride must be put to the side if you will honor the Lord. Our Jesus knelt and washed the feet of His disciples to show us that the Christian is to *lead by serving*. If you are suffering, draw near to God and ask Him how you can honor Jesus in the midst of the suffering. Volunteer to work at the Nursing Home and Long Term Care facilities. If you are in pain, the best way to forget that pain is to focus on doing what Christ has told you to do.

b. Draw near to God in holiness: God is **high and holy**, and dwells in a **high and holy Heaven**. Could your suffering be *self-inflicted*, that is, could you be in sin and the Lord be disciplining you? If there is unconfessed sin in your lives then repent, turn back to God, and look for

deliverance. It is written:

1 Peter 1:14-16 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: (15) But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; (16) Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

Are you an **obedient child**, or do you cause your Holy Parent undue grief? Christians, we are called to be separate from the world, to love God our Savior, to be a bright and shining light in this present evil age. **If you will draw nigh to God, He will draw nigh to you (James 4:8)**. The Scripture says:

James 4:8-10 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse [your] hands, [ye] sinners; and purify [your] hearts, [ye] double minded. (9) Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and [your] joy to heaviness. (10) Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

The life devoted to God will always show that devotion in how it lives even in the midst of adversity. You are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Love Him, Live for Him, and look upward. May God touch your hearts with these words.



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