

"Meant for Good"

Heartaches come to all of us, and we wonder how God fits in all this. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. This is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." God is just and His purpose is good, even when we don't understand why. Today we're exploring how God uses our heartaches for good. Stay with us.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way, we're here to search God's Word for the Lord's Way. The Holy Scriptures tell us all we need to know to be saved and to live righteous lives. They reveal God's grace and love, how God watches over us and helps us through the struggles and disappointments of life. God is good and will never permit us to face more than we can bear. God often uses things we consider harsh to bring about good. Even when we don't understand, we can trust God.

When Joseph was just seventeen years old, his father showed him love more than his ten brothers and made him a coat of many colors. Joseph later made a bad report about his brothers, and his brothers hated him and couldn't speak peaceably to him. God revealed to Joseph some miraculous dreams that showed his brothers and parents bowing down to him. These dreams led his brothers to hate Joseph even more.

They wanted to kill Joseph; but due to Reuben's interference, the brothers sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt. Joseph served Potiphar until Potiphar's scheming wife falsely charged him with trying to seduce her. Potiphar punished Joseph by placing him in Pharaoh's prison. But the hand of the Lord was always with Joseph, and God put him next to Pharaoh to save Israel during the famine. Even in the harshest times, God never forsook Joseph.

When their father Jacob died, the brothers worried Joseph might take vengeance on them. But Joseph spoke kindly to his brothers. He explained in Genesis 50 and verse 20, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive." What the brothers meant for evil, God meant for good. God works His good purpose, even when men are at their worst.

Now we offer the information on this program about the goodness of God free. And if you'd like a printed copy our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org and on YouTube.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Psalm 23, and explore God's goodness in times of trouble.

Our reading today comes from Psalm 23. A psalm of David beloved and probably the best known.

The LORD is my shepherd,

I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside quiet waters.

He restores my soul;

He guides me in the paths of righteousness

For His name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I fear no evil, for You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You have anointed my head with oil;
My cup overflows.

Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Oh what a wonderful relationship we have with God. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that You bless us and watch over us every day of our lives. That You prepared a home in heaven for us if we remain faithful. And Father we pray You will bless us as we study together today. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Evil and painful things happen to all, all of us and we don't always know why. Why do the young die? Why are there earthquakes, hurricanes, and tornadoes? Why do the evil men rule over nations? If God is completely good and all powerful, why does He allow suffering? Is there some reason why all these bad things happen? Many times it's not what we know that causes us the greatest sorrow; it's what we don't know.

Now God sees what we can't see and He knows what we don't know. Some things He reveals in His Word, and but other things are secret. Deuteronomy 29:29 says, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." Now God reveals what we need in order to do His will, but He doesn't explain everything to us.

Though we don't know God's purpose for some evil event doesn't mean that there isn't a reason. We're so limited in knowledge now, but we may understand many things in the future that we can't now see. For instance, we didn't understand much of what took place in our childhood until we became parents and had children of our own. Our parents didn't explain everything. And we couldn't understand everything, even if they had. Later in life, however, we learned that our strict parents loved and cared for us far more than we imagined. We can comprehend many things today that we couldn't explain earlier. Loving parents discipline their children because they can see what their children can't. And so it is with God.

Hebrews 12 verses 10 to 11 says of our earthly parents, "For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he [that is God] disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." We can see the discipline that we received early in life became a great blessing for us later. Because they disciplined us, we learned to discipline ourselves.

When God disciplines us, we should understand it positively and not negatively. The Bible says in Hebrews 12:5 to 7, "'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by him; for those whom the lord loves he disciplines, and he scourges every son whom he receives.' It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?" God doesn't discipline us because He's evil or mean; He disciplines us to strengthen our character so we might endure.

God can see the future, and He often allows today's struggles to happen to prepare us. David faced a lion and a bear before he faced Goliath. Joseph managed a household and a prison before he managed Egypt. The struggle you face today may prepare you for some greater task tomorrow. Paul confidently told the Philippians in chapter 1, verse 6, "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." God is indeed working in our lives and through our lives to bring to completion what He wills.

Paul later urges the church in Philippians 2:12 to 13, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” Whatever God does, He does to bring about what’s good and right. When we serve God’s good pleasure, we know it leads to our eternal good.

Now not everything that happens to us is good. We’ve all had our heartaches and disappointments. We’ve all faced callous people who unjustly abused us. But God has this amazing ability to turn what is painful at one point in our lives into something that blesses at a another point. The apostle Paul endured as much abuse as any Christian in ancient times, but never once does he engage in a pity party or entertain the notion that God doesn’t love him. Paul said in Romans 8:28, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Paul spoke this at a time when he knew many Christians would suffer and Rome would bring charges against the church.

God causes all things, good or bad, to work together for good. And God uses even our heartaches to bring some good blessing. We may not know what or how or when, but we know God can cause good. We know this by faith, because we know the God who makes this promise keeps His promises. Paul denied that their suffering separated them from the love or the blessing of God.

Paul said in Romans 8:35 to 39, “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, ‘For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Far from separating us from the love of God, suffering may lead us to a greater love for God. Paul gives us a little insight into how God uses our struggles and heartaches to bless us in Romans 5:3 to 5. He says, “Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance (or patience) produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” Christian suffering produces the ability to endure, endurance produces character, and character produces hope. Suffering is how we mature in our faith and love for God. Suffering may not be pleasant, but it is for our eternal good. It provides a necessary training ground to build us up.

1 Peter 5 verses 8 to 10 says, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.” God permits suffering, but He’s also the God of all grace who both tests and restores us. God knows how to heal the wounds of life.

Now we all face suffering, but we don’t all react to suffering the same way. No one likes to suffer, but how we react to it determines our relationship with God. Some learn love and compassion from their suffering, while others harden their hearts and become bitter. We can’t always control what happens to us, but we can choose how we will respond. James 1 verses 2 to 4 says, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance (or patience). And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect (that is

mature) and complete, lacking in nothing.” Now that struggle or heartache that you face may be just the test that matures you in Christ and equips you for greater service. God may be blessing you through this struggle. Consider what God is doing for you and in you as something joyful. See the good.

God may be fitting you for a service to bless the lives of many. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1:3 to 5, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.” We all need someone who is experienced to help us through the struggles. And your heartache and God’s comfort may be equipping you to help others who are going through the heartache that you’re facing. You understand your heartache in ways others don’t, and that understanding helps to comfort others in their affliction. You can let your pain make you bitter or make you better.

Can God be both loving and yet permit suffering? How can a loving Father permit suffering? Many people assume that love and suffering are mutually exclusive. If God permits suffering, some assume that God could not possibly love us. Well let’s pause here and ask, “What if suffering demonstrates love? What if someone chooses to suffer in order to demonstrate his love?” What if a loving person in order to achieve good for others is willing to suffer? What if loving people are willing to sacrifice now in order to bring about something better in the future?

Suffering is not simply a human matter; God also knows what it means to suffer. The God who permits us to suffer also permitted His Son Jesus to suffer. The Lord Jesus was willing to suffer many things to show His love. On the cross He demonstrated His love for His Father. And speaking of His death on the cross, Jesus said in John 14:31, “so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me.” Jesus earnestly prayed in Luke 22:42, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” Oh, Jesus despised the shame of the cross but He was willing to endure the suffering and fulfill the will of the Father, because He loved the Father.

Now God our Father loved mankind enough to sacrifice His Son Jesus, so that He could atone for their sins. God said through the prophet Isaiah 53:5 to 6, “But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.” God sent His Son to this earth to sacrifice Himself, so that He might bear the punishment for our sins and might be able to forgive us. By His scourging we are healed. He took the chastening for our well-being.

You see love acts and sacrifices out of a determination to do what is best for someone else. Real love always includes some measure of sacrifice. Real love puts the needs of others before the needs and desires of our selves. We can’t speak of love without speaking of suffering and sacrifice in one form or another. Jesus died for your sins to bring you to God because He wanted something better for you. A loving person will give of himself to provide the greater good for someone else. The Lord Jesus demonstrates His undeniable love for you in His death on the cross. He died for you.

Let’s pray together. Oh Father we’re thankful that You loved us enough to send Your Son to die for us. Father we’re so sorry that He had to suffer but we’re so thankful that what He did on the cross was able to forgive our sins and to help us. To live honorable and to be Your children. Father help us to do Your will always. In Jesus name, Amen.

You may be having a rough time. Please don't give up on God; don't let your heartache make you bitter. There's hope! The last chapter of your life hasn't yet been written, and there is a life to come. One day God will right every wrong, make good prevail, and dry every tear. God has a home for you in heaven. Put your trust in Him and obey Him.

The apostle Paul, speaking about his troubled life, wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:8 to 10, "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies." Paul knew that whatever happened to him now could not take away the promise of God in the next life. He said in Romans 8:18, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." We need the hope of Christ in our lives!

And how do we get that hope? We get it through trusting and obeying the Lord. Believe in the Lord Jesus with all your heart, repent and forsake your sins, confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, and be baptized into Christ. Now baptism is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ so that God may wash away your sins. Now when you're baptized the Lord will add you to the church, He'll make you His child. Christ suffered greatly to bless you and to show you just how much, how much He loves you. Show your love by serving Him.

We hope that today's study about being meant for good and God's goodness has encouraged you. If you want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. Now you can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." And be sure to like the programs you watch. And we also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. We want you to have one. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

We do ask that you focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church family. And I realize some of you for health reasons cannot attend worship; I'm speaking to those who can attend and haven't been. There's probably a church of Christ near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. as always we say God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.