

"Meant for Good "

Heartaches come to all of us, and we wonder how God fits in all this. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And 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 Scriptures tell us all that we need to know to be saved and to live righteously. 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 He will not put more on us 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 loved him more than his brothers and made him a coat of many colors. Joseph 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 Joseph in an exalted position and his brothers and parents bowing down to him. Well these dreams led his bothers 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 rape 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 in order 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. And God works His good purpose, even when men are at their worst.

We offer our study about the goodness of God for free. If you'd like a printed copy of our study, 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 have transcripts and stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org.

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 one of the most beloved Psalms of all time, Psalm 23.

The LORD is my shepherd,
I shall not want.
He makes me to 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.

That's a reading from God's holy word, From the prophet David. Let's pray together. Oh Father, we're thankful that through good times and harsh times You're with us, that You protect us, that You help us, that You bless us. And Father help us to be devoted to You all the days of our lives. In Jesus name, Amen.

Evil and painful things happen to all of us, and we don't always know the reasons 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? Well it's not what we know that causes us the greatest sorrow; it's what we don't know.

God sees what we cannot see and He knows what we cannot know. And 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." God reveals what is good for us and what we need in order to do His will, but He doesn't explain everything to us.

But just because we don't know God's purpose for allowing some hurtful event doesn't mean that there isn't one. We're limited in knowledge, but we may understand many things in the future that we can't see in the present. 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. We couldn't understand everything, even if they had explained. But later in life we learned that our strict, rule-making 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 see. So it is with God.

Hebrews 12 verses 10 and 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 that later in life, when the discipline we received early in life became a great blessing for us, but not until later. Because they disciplined us, we learned to discipline ourselves.

When God disciplines us we should understand it positively and not negatively. Hebrews 12:5 to 7 says, "'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the lord, nor faint when you are reproved 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 wants to hurt us; He disciplines us to strengthen our character so that we might endure.

God can see down the road much farther than we can, and He often allows today's struggles to happen in order to prepare us for the future. David faced a lion and a bear before he faced Goliath. Joseph managed a household and a prison before he managed Egypt. The struggle that you face today

may be preparing 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 verses 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 is good and right. When we serve God's good pleasure, we know that 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 us at 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 and verse 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.

Well God causes all things, good and bad, to work together for good. 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 the promise keeps the promise. Paul denied that their suffering separated them from the love or the blessing of God.

You remember 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're 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."

Now 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 the book of Romans chapter 5 verses 3 to 5, he said "Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." Christian suffering produces the ability to endure, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope. Suffering is the means by which 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 chapter 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've 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.

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 or become bitter. We can't always control what happens to us, but we can choose how we will respond to what happens. 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. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." 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 verses 3 to 5, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and that 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 has "been there" to help us through our struggles. Your heartache and God's comfort may be equipping you to help others who're going through the same heartache that you're facing. You understand your heartache in ways that 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, which will it be.

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. That if God permits suffering, some assume that God could not possibly love us. We have to pause here and ask, "What if that 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 to suffer. Jesus was willing to suffer the cross as a means to show His love. And on the cross He demonstrated His love for His Father. Speaking of His death on the cross, you remember 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 and verse 42, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." Jesus despised the shame of the cross but was willing to endure the suffering and fulfill the will of the Father, why, because He loved the Father.

Now God our Father loved mankind enough to sacrifice His Son Jesus, so that He could atone for our sins. God said through the prophet in 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 upon Him." God sent His Son to this earth to sacrifice Himself, so that He might bear the punishment for our sins and we might be forgiven. And 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 somebody else. Real love includes sacrifice and puts the needs of others before its own needs and desires. Far from being mutually exclusive, true love always has some measure of sacrifice or suffering! A loving person is

willing to give of himself in order to provide the greater good for someone else. The Lord Jesus demonstrates His undeniable love for you in His death on the cross.

Let's pray. Oh Father we are so grateful for What Jesus did for us and how He suffered for us so that He might bring us to You our Father. Help us to do Your Will always. In Jesus name, Amen.

You may be going through a really rough time. Please don't give up on God; don't let your heartache make you bitter. There's hope for something better. And 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. And God has a home for you in heaven, if you'll put your trust in Him and obey Him.

The apostle Paul, speaking about his troubled life, wrote in 2 Corinthians 4 verses 8 to 10, "We're 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." He knew that whatever happened to him in this life could not take away the promise of God in the next life. He said in Romans 8 and verse 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!

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, immersed in water, baptized into Christ. Yes, baptism is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ so that God may wash away your sins. And when you're baptized the Lord will add you to His church and make you His child. Christ suffered greatly to bless you and to show you just how much He loves you. Show your love by serving Him.

We hope that today's study about suffering has stirred your heart. 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. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. And there's also a schedule of programs and a map with the location of churches that are in your area. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not here to beg for money. We're here to help you get to heaven, and that's our goal.

We do hope that you'll get your heart focused on God today by worshiping at church. There's probably a church of Christ in your area. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to 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, let them know that you watch, and encourage them, it will be a blessing for them. As always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.