

3.29.20 ~ **How Should God's People Respond in Perilous Times?**
(Assorted References)

Good Morning to you on this Lord's Day. Be assured that God is in control and He will get you through this trying time of COVID-19, with the mandatory stay-at-home order, and the prohibition of people gathering together.

With no end to this pandemic in view at this time, and so much unknown, it might be hard to find something encouraging to think about.

Well, first and foremost, if you have repented of your sin, believing in God's Son as Savior and Lord, then you belong to God and He promises to never leave you or forsake you for all of eternity, and nothing visible or invisible can ever separate you from His unconditional love.

Romans 8:37-39, "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."

It is true that Christians are forever protected and provided for by Almighty God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth and everything in them. But it is also true that we will most likely experience pain and suffering in this life.

2Corinthians 4:8-9, "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed."

2Corinthians 4:16-18, "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Revelation 21:3-4, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

God can and does heal miraculously, but not always; God will eventually heal all His children, although for a time, we will most likely have to suffer through things like COVID-19, with the possibility a recession, even a depression, as a result of this pandemic.

At times like this it is very reasonable for us to ask God why? But you know, most likely, the answer from God is going to be silence. Why is that? Well, let's

consider Job (4,000 years ago), he asked God 16 different times "why" bad things were happening to him and his family. And even though Job had been an honest, moral, and kind man, God never answered his "why" questions; instead, God reminded Job Who he was talking to, and the great power and wisdom that belongs to God, alone.

Have you ever asked, "Why me, God?" or "Why them?" or more currently, "Why COVID-19?" "Why now?" "When will it end?"

Sometimes we can answer the "why" questions ourselves. Perhaps we are sick because we failed to eat, exercise, and rest properly. Maybe an accident, incident, or bad situation, was the result of our own carelessness or worse, our sin.

Our present struggle may be the result of God's own loving discipline, trying to get our attention before we get ourselves into more severe trouble.

Hebrews 12:5-7, "you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, '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?"

Hebrews 12:10-11, "For they [our fathers] disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but [God] disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. 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."

Instead of asking "why God?" we ought to view our current struggle as an opportunity for God to demonstrate His sovereign love, protection, provision, and power in our lives.

Yes, God may heal us or those we are praying for, perhaps He will remove the trial or struggle; but then, He may allow us to go through it, while at the same time providing His divine grace in the very midst of it.

And although it is not necessarily a pleasant thought, there are some good things that can come from our suffering:

Suffering can cause us to grow in our faith...

James 1:2-4, "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.."

Suffering can prepare us to show empathy toward others...

2Corinthians 1:3-4, "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.”

Having suffered ourselves, we are able to reach out with God’s comfort and encouragement to others, just as we ourselves have received it from God.

Suffering can both humble and strengthen us...

2Corinthians 12:7-10, “Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.’

Suffering allows us to share in Christ’s suffering...

1Peter 4:12-14, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”

Suffering will be fully rewarded in heaven...

1Corinthians 2:9, “just as it is written, ‘Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.”

Matthew 25:34, “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”

God is sovereign in our suffering, and we are eternally secure in Him!

Psalms 139:13-16, “For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.”

Ephesians 1:1-14, “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.”

Many unpleasant things will occur in this life that frustrate us, hurt us, even tempt us to forget God’s marvelous blessings, His unconditional love, and His eternal faithfulness.

I am convinced that we must walk through our trials, not around them, and we must stand firm when attacked by the Devil, the World, and our own flesh; for it is through God’s power, God’s plan, and God’s purpose, that we bring glory and honor and praise to Him.

Paul is an amazing example of one who suffered tremendous trials and hardships. **2Corinthians 11:24-27**, “Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.”

God didn’t remove Paul’s trials, but instead gave him the grace to bear up under and to have victory through them.

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flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Paul found his strength and his comfort in Christ.

Philippians 4:6-7, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:12-13, “I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

Philippians 4:19-20, “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Suffering is part of life for those who seek to honor God...

2Timothy 3:12, “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

Satan, sin, as well as many natural factors are the direct agents in most human suffering, but not without God permitting it to happen.

Matthew 10:28-31, “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.”

How should we then respond during hard times, trials, and tribulations?

1Peter 5:6-11, “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect,

confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

When we or those we care about experience pain and suffering, we should immediately turn to God. Our first response must be to pray, not to worry or become anxious, but to turn to our heavenly Father and put the matter in His hands, for He is the Almighty, He alone is sovereign.

Prayer activates the power, purpose, plan, and provision of God, for those who believe and trust in *the Word of God*.

Ephesians 6:10-17, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is *the Word of God*.”

It is through the power of God’s Word and lovingkindness that our anxiety is replaced with peace, our grief is replaced with comfort, and our despair is replaced with hope.

(Hebrews 4:12-13), “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”

Instead of asking why, worrying, becoming anxious, getting angry, blaming God or others, let us direct ourselves to prayer, through which God will impart His sovereign, gracious, bountiful and merciful love to all who belong to Him.

We must trust God to see us through everything, and that includes our new normal of being mandated to stay at home, and not being allowed to be with our church family, because of the Novel Coronavirus pandemic, known as COVID-19.

God can put an immediate end to this pandemic, but most likely, He will not. By the way, do you know why it is called the “Novel” virus? The noun form of the word novel is usually associated with a book, story, or other work of fiction; but the

adjective form of the word novel (as used in naming the Novel Coronavirus) means, 'something new, not resembling something formerly known or identified.'

COVID-19 may be new to planet earth, but it is not news to God, He wants us to trust Him and to glorify Him through this present "Novel" situation, but we must focus on Jesus Christ, Who endured more trials, pain, and suffering then we can ever imagine.

Philippians 2:5-8, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Hebrews 12:2-3, "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

God knows ahead of time the trials and tribulations we will face, and God alone is able and willing to provide for us, to protect us, to lead us, walking hand-in-hand with us, and at times, even carrying us.

God loves us more than we can ever imagine; therefore, we ought to turn to Him, as dearly loved children would turn to their own father; we should call out to Him (**Psalms 9:9**), "The Lord [is] a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble," (**Psalms 46:1**), "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," (**Psalms 62:8**), "Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him."

God allows times of testing and suffering into our lives in order to strengthen us and to stimulate spiritual growth among the family of God, for we are members of the body of Christ, who is the Head over all.

But above all, I believe the most important reason that God allows trials and tribulations into the lives of those who belong to Him, is so that He might receive glory, honor, and praise, as we trust Him to protect and provide for us through this life, at the end of which He will bring us into heaven to live with Him, so that God will be worshipped forever.

Revelation 21:3-4, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every

tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”

Revelation 22:12-13, “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

Revelation 22:20-21, “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming soon. Amen. Come Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.’”

Pastor Mike

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