

Trust

God seems to be silent. He isn't hearing my pleas, or it seems that way to me. I've been asking God for years, to bring my spouse around to faith in Jesus, and that my spouse comes to church with me. No response. Try again. I've been asking God for years to bring my prodigal child back to church. No response. Try again. I've been asking God for years to give me a better marriage. No response. Try again. I've been asking God for years to heal the wounds of my past. But they still torment me. Try again. I've been asking God for years to provide me physical healing from this illness that I or a family member has to deal with. But the health problems continue to linger. God are you there? Where are you God?

Maybe you even wonder in times of reflection, "Am I the problem? Is God mad at me? Is it because I don't have enough faith? Do my prayers even matter? And maybe, if we are brutally honest, we are sometimes filled with resentment. We see other people have their prayers answered, or other people who don't even know Jesus who don't have to face the same problems that you are facing. And in desperation, you cry out, "It's not fair!"

In our study for today we have a human being going through this type of turmoil. Tragedy, dark days. His name is Job. We see him, confused, angry, resentful, depressed, and trying to get some answers. In one day he lost 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 5000 oxen, 500 donkeys, all his servants were killed, and then the crowning blow was that all 10 of his kids were killed in a freak accident. Shortly thereafter, He lost his health, and his entire body from the bottom of his feet to the top of his head was covered in boils. Over night, one of the most wealthy, well-respected, and righteous men on earth was reduced to nothing. So devastating were these circumstances that his wife's only advice was for Job to curse God and die.

The book of Job is all about one question in life: Will a person continue to worship God if he loses everything? Will a person continue to follow and love God if everything goes wrong in his life? Let me make that personal. Would you? Would you continue to follow God, to trust God, to love God, if everything went wrong in your life?

That is the ultimate test of faith. And I want to tell you at some point in your life you're going to go through that test. Guaranteed. You're going to go through a time when it looks like everything in your life is going wrong. And God's going to watch and see will you still trust Him. Will you still trust Him when the bottom, the rug's pulled out from under you? Will you trust Him when it does not make sense? It's chaotic. You're crushed. There's a tragedy. This is the ultimate test of faith because not all your prayers in life are going to be answered the way you want them to be answered and in the timetable that you want.

Today, I want to encourage all Christians to hang in there. To continue to fight the good fight of faith. That even though the skies are dark, God is still carrying out his good purposes for you. Continue to "Trust His Ways Are Best!"

How would you react if someone came to your place of employment, who has zilch for experience, and began to tell you how to do your job? You'd say the nerve of that guy or gal. They act like they know what they're talking about, and they haven't the foggiest idea. So it can be said in our relationship with God and our life on this earth. We think we have it figured out. We should get married at this age. We will have this many children. We will live to a ripe age of 82. We will have great health until then. Our death will be quick and painless.

But then the story changes, tragedy strikes. Plug in your tragedy. God, we say, this is a mistake. You don't know what you are doing here. I want you to explain this to me, and do it now. "God says, now wait a minute. I am not obligated to explain myself to you. My wisdom and power is so much above yours. Don't tell me how to run the universe. Remember, I am the architect who planned every detail of the creation of this universe. I am the surveyor who measured the lines and dimensions, and I am the engineer who sank the footings and laid the

cornerstone. Were you there to give me input and direction? If you weren't around at the creation of the world, how can you dispute with me or sit judgment over the way I am conducting the affairs of this world. "Look at how I set up the ocean systems with its tides. I have fixed a limit beyond which the waters cannot go. Please don't tell me how to run this universe!"

God controls the mighty waters of the ocean more easily than you and I can turn on a water faucet or fill the bathtub. He is all powerful, brilliant. And how do you and I treat this all-powerful and all wise God?

Every day you and I break His commandments. We say things that hurt. We think things we should not think. We make mistakes in the way we raise our children; interact with people in the work place, and the way we carry out our work. We slap God in the face with his 10 commandments. Does God owe us anything? No, way. What He owes us, is a sentence of eternal death. The wages of sin is death.

But our God is a master at making a dark situation into a bright one. Look at Calvary. On the outward side, all looks dark. An innocent man going to death by crucifixion. He is mocked, and ridiculed. Who sees any good in this? But wait, in time, we see God's wisdom. Payment has been made for our sins by this substitute. We have a restored relationship with our God. God's plan, which seems too many as the height of folly, is the height of wisdom.

So friend, don't mistake silence on the part of God as absence. Because of Calvary, God is with us. He is for us. His Son, Jesus promises, "Lo, I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world." You see what God has done, is he has purged Job and us of our pride. He has shown us what puny human beings we are in comparison to Him. He brings us to realize our helplessness, and deep need for his help and support. It is His intent through this whole process to lead us to trust Him more firmly.

In Jeremiah 29:11 God says, *"I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you hope and a good future."* You may think that what God is doing in your life right now is painful and is to no avail but God says, "My plan is good. You just don't see it. You need to trust me. You need to have hope because it's a plan to give you a hope and a future." That brings us to our next point. God is indeed working behind the scenes for your best interests. A passage comes to mind. Romans 8:28. *We know that God causes all things to work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose.* Notice first what it does not say. It doesn't say, "All things work out the way I want them to." We would like that and we'd like to interpret it that way but that's not what it says. It does not say, "All things have a happy ending on earth." Because that is not true. All things do not have a happy ending on earth. Reality teaches us that not every patient gets well, that not every couple that gets married lives happily ever after. Reality teaches us that not every business decision makes a million bucks, not every problem is resolved. So we know that's not true. All children don't get straight A's and become captain of the football team. What does it say?

God causes... There is a grand master designer of the universe. And there is a plan that is in action and history is His story. There is no such thing as fate. There is no such thing as chance. There is no such thing as luck – good luck or bad luck. There is no such thing as karma, what will be will be, destiny or "I just happen to fall into it." That is not true. There is a master designer. We make mistakes for sure. We make many mistakes. But God never makes mistakes. *"We know that God causes all things to work together for good."* Circle "all things". What does that include? Does that include illness? Yes. Does that include unemployment? Certainly. Does it include divorce? Some of you have a question about that one. Does it include a miscarriage? Does it include failure? Does it include freak accidents? Does it include the stupid decisions that I make and the mistakes I bring upon myself? Yes! Absolutely, yes! Everything fits into God's plan. The good, the bad, the indifferent. The things that I do, the things I don't do. The things that I control, the things I don't control. All things work together

for good. Notice: It doesn't say, "All things are good." And it does not say God causes all things. God does not. God does not cause rape. God does not cause war. God does not cause famine and poverty. God does not cause leukemia and cancer. To attribute those things to God is to turn God into a monster. God is not a monster. God is incapable of sin. It doesn't say God causes all things. We bring a lot on ourselves.

But it does say that "*God causes all things to work together for good.*" Circle "work together". It's not by accident and it's not separate. They work together. When you're baking a cake you've got to have some flour and some raw eggs and some Crisco and some sugar and some salt and some vanilla. Any one of those things by itself doesn't really taste too good. Have you ever tasted flour? Crisco? Maybe the sugar some of you might say is ok. But none of those things on their own tastes good.

There are a lot of things in your life that are difficult to swallow. They're bitter going down and you choke on them. "Why is that happening?" Not all things in your life are good but they all work together for good. When those elements are put together – just like the element of the cake are put together it produces a cake and the cake is very good. God wants to bake a cake in your life and He wants to take the elements in your life, even the things that are distasteful, bitter, and He wants to work them together.

In Job 23 verse 10 Job says, "But He knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold." I like Job's words. He knows the way I take. My situation has not caught God off guard. My prayer request didn't surprise him. He can be trusted. He is God. My friends, you are not going to get an explanation here on this earth, as to why certain things have happened to you. In fact, some things in this world are not going to be explained until you get to the other side. When you get to heaven you're going to look back and God's going to show you why things happened the way they did. But you're not going to know now. So don't wait for an explanation. Just praise God in spite of the circumstances. Trust His ways are best.

That brings us to our final point. Keep an eternal perspective as you view your dark days. Job says in chapter 19, "in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God." Job is saying, even if my life remains dark and my skin gets destroyed, there is a day coming when-in the flesh- I will see God. God may seem silent now. The heavens may appear closed. But I haven't lost hope. I'm not relying on feelings. I am relying on the truth that I know about God. When it's all said and done, when God sets his feet on the earth at the end of time, I will be there and see Him. All will be well at that point. No more dark days.

So when you are tempted to give up, keep praying. God has not abandoned you. When you don't understand, keep praying. Someday you will understand God's purposes. Remember the dark days are all temporary. Trust in God's control and purpose for your life. Keep your chin up! We join the prophet Habakkuk with his words from chapter 3 verse 17, "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior." Amen.