

Resting In God's Sovereign Care

Psalm 103 and Matthew 6:25-34

Life is filled with inevitabilities. The unavoidable contingencies of living may creep up but finally they happen to us all. Because ours is a fallen world, we cannot avoid the inherent pitfalls. So pain comes to both the good and the bad and none of us is ever exempt. Suffering is too valuable and its work too important for any to miss the visitation. Death still makes house calls. Only one door leads out of life. The miracles of yesterday will not prevent what will happen tomorrow.

Robert Wise wrote a book, "When There Is No Miracle." It's about finding hope in pain and suffering. In his book, Robert tells the reader that twice in his life he had come to the brink. Both times his death was imminent.

The first time when in his young adulthood, he attempted to swim behind a waterfall where he used to swim as a boy to reach a cave, but now the stream was swollen by a recent rain and he didn't realize how dangerous the situation was until he was sucked downward into a whirlpool. No matter how he thrashed, he couldn't escape. His body was being pounded against the rocks and his strength was failing. He felt like his lungs were bursting. In those seconds the chilling fingers of death reached into the center of all his dreams and hope. At that time in his life he knew nothing of the promise of Christ and the victory over death Christ had made provision for by His sacrificial death on the cross. But he prayed desperately and promised God he would do anything God wanted him to do, if only he would live. Then he was hurled against a rock that he could grab hold of. With all his remaining strength he pulled himself upward just enough to grab a gulp of air. With great struggle, he finally freed himself from the raging water. Finally, he regained his strength and climbed to the edge of the cave where he leaped forward through the waterfall toward the bank where he dragged himself up on the grass. Not long afterward, Robert became a born again Christian.

The years sipped by. Then he became ill, but kept on working with a fever of 103. When he finally went to the doctor, tests showed that he had nephritis. There was no medication or treatment. He would lose his kidneys. Finally, he was sleeping 20 hours a day – his entire body ached. Once again he felt like he was in the vortex of a whirlpool. He felt pangs of loneliness. But he kept saying to himself over and over again, "He who has the Son has life." Then he sensed God telling him that he would be healed. Within 24 hours his fever dropped and his kidneys began to function. God touched his body and he was totally healed.

God is sovereign. He has absolute control over all things.

The Universe. The best way to know what is truth is to see what God has inspired men to say about Him in Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16). God declares He is sovereign over all things in the entire universe including the people in it.

Nature. The psalmist wrote, “Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps” (Psalm 135:6). God causes the rain to fall, the grass to grow, and vegetation to bring forth food. There isn’t a single aspect of nature over which the Lord lacks control.

The Nations. “He makes the nations great, then destroys them; He enlarges the nations, then leads them away (Job 12:23).” God’s rule is certain and sure. He keeps watch over the nations (Psalm 66:7), knows what’s happening, and maintains His authority over both good and evil governments (Romans 13:1).

Humankind. God has control over unbelievers as well as believers. “He himself gives all men life and breath and everything else” (Acts 17:25 NIV). He forms us in our mother’s womb, knows the number of hairs on our head, and determines the appointed times and places of our lives (Psalm 139:13; Luke 12:7; Acts 17:26). Spiritual life as well as physical life is under His complete control (John 6:44).

When we believe God is sovereign and experience this truth in our lives, we will be filled to overflowing with peace and joy. We will rest secure in the knowledge that no matter what is happening in our world, or with us, our God is aware of all things and our God reigns.

Despite appearances, evil men are not in control of our world. God is! How, then, does our sovereign God respond to sin and evil? Our knowledge of past events tells us that there are times when God allows sin to run its full course.

God did not create evil, but He has permitted it to exist and uses it to accomplish His good purposes (Isaiah 45:6-7). To believe God is sovereign, we must embrace certain truths: His thoughts and His ways are superior to ours (Isaiah 55:8-9), He always keeps His promises (2 Corinthians 1:20), His perfect character is unchanging (James 1:17), and He has control over everything, including times of blessing and times of disaster (Isaiah 45:7).

God has complete authority over all people and events. He knows the hearts of everyone - how they will act, and what steps to take to accomplish His purposes. At the same time, He calls us to pray, to remain obedient to Him and to wait for His will to become known. In Colossians chapter 2, verse 4, the apostle Paul says that we as God’s people are to be “devoted to prayer.” In fact, communication with God is so vital that Paul adds that we are to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Continuous listening, talking, and relating to our heavenly Father should characterize our lives. The Scriptures explain why this is so important. They assure us that prayer changes *us*. As we seek God’s face and spend time in His Word, we will be transformed. *Our* desires will be replaced by *His* desires and *our thinking* will align more closely with *His thoughts*. As our understanding of His character grows, we will have a better idea about how to pray in accordance with His will.

God does answer our prayers (James 5:16). He has promised to listen and respond to the prayers of His children (Isaiah 65:24). He assures us that He will act when our petitions are offered in Jesus' name – that is praying in Jesus' stead as Jesus Himself would pray in that situation. As we seek the will of God for a given situation, His will becomes known to us. We will then know how we should pray. However, God, knowing all things reserves the right to determine both the answer and the timing for the matter that concerns us (John 14:13).

Prayer invites God to act. Prayer doesn't alter any of God's divine purposes or plans; nor does it cause Him to change His mind. What He has decided will occur, and His decisions will be exactly the right ones to accomplish His will. Our prayers are powerful when, without reservation, we invite God to do His work in our lives and the lives of others.

When we seek God's leading in our lives, we may need to wait for God's direction to become clear. Waiting is probably one of the most difficult things we are called to do. This is especially true when we're facing a pressing situation that requires clarity but no answers come. Pressure mounts while we are waiting for a job offer or a phone call or a pay raise or for improved health. When something we really desire is a long time coming, waiting can turn to frustration and perhaps even anger.

One of the biggest mistakes Christians can make in this situation is to think that waiting is the same thing as doing nothing at all. The truth is, waiting is an activity that requires tremendous faith and focus. Many times, God will ask us to sit tight for a while before He grants our request or brings about the resolution to what's troubling us. There are many reasons for this. Waiting builds patience and endurance. Waiting allows time for circumstances to come together in a way that produces God's will for us. Waiting also gives us time to understand an issue more clearly, or to deal with anxiety that could lead to rash action.

Although it is difficult, waiting is absolutely essential as Christians walking in obedience to God. This waiting can result in special blessings. Imagine what would happen if the captain of a space shuttle grew tired of waiting for his launch and proceeded ahead of command. This seems unthinkable to us, yet how often do we find ourselves rushing ahead of God's time for us to act? We say things we later regret, we spend money we shouldn't have spent, we become involved in relationships or contracts that are hard to get out of and then make snap judgments that later cost us dearly. If only we had the wisdom to wait upon the Lord and the persistence to always seek God's will and the way we should take. How different the circumstances would become!

God is always on the move. He is continually active. He has a definite plan for your life, but He may be calling you to wait for a while. If this is so, abide in Christ and be assured that God will, in His time, work all things out for good. But remember that what is best for God's kingdom and God's glory is what is most important to God as well as to us as His dearly loved children. Many times we as God's people may be called to suffer and even lose our lives for

the gospel's sake. All of the disciples of Jesus suffered many things including imprisonment, banishment and execution.

In times of waiting, God wants us to learn how to abide in His care. Isn't this exactly what He instructed the disciples to do? He told them to *abide*, which meant to remain, lodge, tarry, continue right where they were until He instructed them differently. And it is what *He* desires us to do, not just when circumstances become difficult and we feel afraid, but at every turn in life and in every season. He said, "Abide in Me, and I in you... He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

The three years the disciples had been with the Lord had been full and productive. Then tragedy struck and their lives were instantly shattered. Yet once again Jesus told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to "wait for what the Father had promised" (Acts 1:4). He was referring to the arrival of the Holy Spirit. This was God's gift to them, ensuring that He would be with them forever, just as He had promised.

Think what would have happened if they had said, "We're too busy to wait. The world is falling apart, and we need to do something now!" They would have missed an awesome blessing. Also, they would have disobeyed God and stepped out of His will. They probably would have spent the rest of their lives searching for inner peace, joy, and meaning to life – something that only God's Spirit can provide as we follow the revealed will of God for us.

Have you ever noticed how difficult it is to *do nothing but pray* when you feel like your world has fallen apart? Many times, we feel we can't wait because we don't want to face the truth or deal with the issues that need attention in our lives. So, rather than take up time to determine the necessary corrections, we rush forward with little or no direction and the results are horrendous. Sooner or later, our fast pace catches up with us. We may think that if we stop, we will never recover the ground we have lost. But the truth is, if we keep rushing past God's will, at some point the consequence of our decision to ignore His warning will be very costly.

So I encourage you to trust your future to the Almighty God! Follow His lead and you will be at peace in all happens and in all that you do. God promises to be with you throughout your journey. Go forward with God! He loves you far too much to forsake you!

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