



God is in the business of changing our lives. Even though we may resist His efforts, we know that we are “new creations” because of the new life we have in Christ: “the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). We deeply desire to honestly pray as Jesus did, “Not my will, but Yours be done.” But if the truth were known, we sometimes wonder, “Why do bad things happen to good people (i.e. *me*)?” And, in our pain, we sometimes ask, “Where is God when it hurts?” *God has a purpose behind every problem.*

Last week we looked at the first of three instruments that God uses to bring lasting transformation in our lives: *truth, trouble, and temptation*. Today we will examine how pain, suffering, and trouble are essential ingredients in our journey to become more like Jesus. In his book, *The Problem of Pain*, C.S. Lewis describes how it is often during our pain God speaks to us most. “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” If only we would listen to that quiet voice! *God has a purpose behind every problem.*

Corrie ten Boom experienced pain in ways that very few people ever have. She suffered as a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp. Her conclusion? “If you look at the world, you’ll be distressed. If you look within, you’ll be depressed. But if you look at Christ, you’ll be at rest!” Mother Teresa understood well the loving and powerful hand of God in the midst of her difficulties. She said, “I know God will not give me anything I can’t handle.” She then added a heart-felt sentiment that resonates with our own soul-response, “I just wish that He didn’t trust me so much.” But He does! He trusts you to trust in Him, and He loves you just the way you are. He just loves you too much to leave you that way! *God has a purpose behind every problem.*

Read Romans 8:28-39. Now, let’s do a close examination of verse 28:

1. **And we know.** Certainty during tribulation is a precious commodity.
What are your convictions about trials? (Job 5:7; James 1:2-4)
2. **That God causes.** The classic question asks, “If God is all *powerful*, all *good*, and all *loving*, why does he allow pain and suffering in our lives?”
What are your convictions about God’s *power*? (Ephesians 3:20, 1:19-21)
His *goodness*? (Jeremiah 29:11; Genesis 50:20)
His *love*? (1 John 4:16; Roman 5:8; 8:35-39)
3. **All things.** (1 Thessalonians 5:18; Philippians 4:4)
4. **To work together.** (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, 11)
5. **For good.** (James 1:2-4; Romans 5:1-5; Romans 12:2b)
6. **To those who love him and are called.** (Romans 8:17; John 3:16-18; Matthew 13:40-43)
7. **According to His purpose.** (Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 2:20-21)

APPLICATION: Warren advises you to respond to problems as Jesus would: Remember that God’s plan is good, rejoice and give thanks, and refuse to give up! (pp197-199) *God has a purpose behind every problem.*

1 Peter 4:12-13, 19
James 1:2-4

*“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us
an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”
(2 Corinthians 4:17 NIV)*

Question 1

Job 5:7 Yet man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward.

James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Question 2- power

Ephesians 3:20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us

Ephesians 1:19-21 [I pray that you may know] his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Question 2- goodness

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Genesis 50:20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Question 2- love

1 John 4:16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Question 3

1 Thessalonians 5:18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord at all times. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Question 4

Ecclesiastes 3:1 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:

2 a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot,

3 a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build,

4 a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,

5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain,

6 a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away,

7 a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak,

8 a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

Question 5

Romans 5:1-5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Romans 12:2b Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Question 6

Romans 8:17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Matthew 13 40-43 "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Question 7

Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son,

1 Peter 2:20-21 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

Application

1 Peter 4:12-13 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

19 So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.