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Fall 2023

Confident in the Face of Hard Questions

Sermon Title: Trusting God Through Suffering

To be used with Session #3: Why Do We Suffer?

Scripture: Romans 8:28-39

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the Bible study *Why Do We Suffer?* this sermon invites the listener to strive to trust God and His Word more than any feelings experienced while suffering. Suffering, while we do not long for it, is temporary. God's Word is eternal and, as followers of Jesus, we must learn to trust in the goodness of God no matter the circumstances we are experiencing.

Introduction: Let's start this sermon with a question. Have our feelings ever been wrong? We may have felt like we had a disagreement with a spouse or family member. Our feelings told us it was a ten out of ten on the conflict scale. We lost sleep at night and played conversations out in our own mind. Then, when we woke up the next morning, we came to understand it was only a slight misunderstanding and it was barely a one out of ten on the conflict scale. Our feelings did not tell us the truth.

When we are experiencing suffering, our feelings can often be less than accurate. We tell ourselves that the world as we know it is coming to an end and God has abandoned us when we most needed Him. While we may never completely understand why we experience suffering, we can trust in God through our suffering. We know this to be true because God's Word tells us so. Our goal today is to learn to trust God more than our feelings when we suffer.

1. We can trust that God is good (Rom. 8:28-30)

The first truth we must embrace in this passage is that God works together in all things for His good. We learn at least two things from this truth. First, we learn that God works in all things, no matter if they are good or bad. The passage does not say that all things are good. Instead, we learn that God works in all things. Second, we learn that He works in all things for good. This teaches us that God is good. If He was not good, He would be unable to work for the good in all circumstances.

It is important to point out the phrase "those who love God, who are called according to His purpose." If anyone has ever pondered the benefit of loving God in the now, here is your answer. Those who love God now will be able to experience Him even while undergoing the

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suffering of this world. While we do not want to experience suffering, we can rest assured that He will be with us and will be working for our good no matter the circumstances.

2. We can trust that God is for us (Rom. 8:31-36).

This passage is translated as “If God is for us, who is against us?” We are accurately handling the text and original language if we translate this to “since God is for us.” We are adopted as His children and our heavenly Father is for us, no matter the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

When we come to realize and trust in the fact that God is for us, we are not nearly as concerned about who or what is against us. This truth becomes even more vibrant when we understand the context in which Paul was writing to the church at Rome. Persecution was rampant and those following Jesus were losing their lives for the gospel. Yet Paul was telling them that the things they were facing lacked power compared to Almighty God. It would be wise for all of us to hold on to this truth when we are experiencing suffering.

3. We can trust that God is with us (Rom. 8:37-39)

“Persuaded” means to be convinced about something based upon reasoning and understanding. Paul was convinced that nothing was going to separate a believer from the “love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Paul’s list of things that would not be able to separate us from God’s love was extensive and all inclusive. He wrote of things in the present as well as things in the future.

The key in finding hope from this passage while experiencing suffering is found in the word “in.” A follower of Jesus has the love of Jesus *in* him and not merely *with* him. The love of Jesus is not merely with us, it is in us, and nothing can separate His followers from His love. Knowing this truth give us hope even while experiencing suffering.

Conclusion: It has long been stated that we are either heading into a storm, in the middle of a storm, or coming out of a storm. We are all going to experience storms and suffering in this life. This is a direct result of living in a fallen world. We, however, do not have to go through these storms on our own. We have a Savior who is good and is for us. He is also loving, and we cannot be separated from His love. The question now becomes, do we want to walk with Jesus through our suffering or do we want to make this journey on our own? Let’s pray that we would accept His offer to walk with us.

Author Bio

Tod Tanner has degrees from Texas A&M University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has pastored churches in Texas and Tennessee. He and his family reside in Wartrace, Tennessee, and he serves as the Vice President of the Tennessee Baptist Foundation.

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