

TRUTH B-P CHURCH
Adult Sunday School

THE SEVENFOLD WILL OF GOD

LESSON SEVEN: THE PERMISSIVE WILL

I. INTRODUCTION

No one really question why good things happen. The question asked is almost always: Why do bad things happen even to God's people? Although sin is the root cause of all bad things happen in this world, there is this aspect of God's will that provides us the answer why bad things do happen to God's people: the permissive will of God.

There are quite a number of passages in the Bible that clearly reveal God's permissive will among His people. In this lesson, we will study only two of them: a) the painful trials of Job and b) the test at "Marah."

II. THE PAINFUL TRIALS OF JOB (Job 1:6-12)

1. Job was known for suffering the greatest trials no man has ever gone through before. He lost almost everything overnight which include all His beloved children, wealth and properties. That was the first strike and it was not the end. After a short while, the second strike came and Job suffered great pain with boils covering his whole body. This is probably worse than dying because of the intense pain from head to toe.
2. Why did Job have to go through such intense suffering? The answer is God's permissive will. Job was accused by Satan for fearing God because of the blessings he received. He is sure that if all these blessings are removed, Job would surely curse God to His face (see Job 1:10-11).
3. While God permits Satan to afflict Job with painful trials, Satan can only go as far as God permits him. This reveals God's absolute power and unlimited control. Satan's power is limited and is effective as far as God permits.
4. Job's painful trials came about not because God was punishing him for his sins. It was for the sole purpose to strengthen the faith of Job to keep trusting in the Lord no matter what happens. Job himself confessed, "But he knoweth the way I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). Job's faith shines even brighter when going through these trials which God permitted in his life.
5. When Job suffered the loss of all his children and great possessions, his response was remarkably noteworthy. Instead of being filled with wrath or bitterness, Job worshipped and gave glory to God. "And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this, Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly" (Job 1:21-22).
6. The permissive will of God ultimately brings all glory to God. It fulfils God's purposes for His children that they may be built up in their faith and His Name be highly magnified and glorified. Romans 8:28 captures the permissive will of God excellently, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."
7. Understanding God's permissive will brings much joy and comfort to faithful believers who are going through great suffering and pain as a result of their faith in Jesus Christ. Like Job, let us keep trusting in God to the end.

III. THE TEST AT “MARAH” (Exodus 15:1-27)

1. Exodus 15:1-20 records the song of praise whereby the children of Israel celebrated and commemorated their victory at the Red Sea. They were joyful because they had been miraculously redeemed from bondage, and miraculously crossed the Red Sea on dry land. They were amazingly delivered from their enemies by God. However, the test of their faith came straight after the Red Sea, and they were facing a great wilderness ahead of them. The permissive will of God came to test their faith. God permitted great trials and challenges to come along their way. Will they pass the test?
2. The turning point and the test of their faith came in verse 22, **“So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.”** We see the children of Israel move quickly from the joy of victory to the ocean of bitterness. It was only three days into their journey they encountered their first problem: shortage of water. They thirst and needed water badly.
3. It was when they spotted a pool of water from a distance, their hopes rose high as they hurried to this potential of life-giving thirst-quenching water. But alas, the water was undrinkable. Verse 23 says, **“And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah.”** One can easily imagine the children of Israel one by one, throwing themselves into the water to quench their thirst but only to find that the water was too bitter and undrinkable at all. The water was not poisonous, but it was too hard and unpleasant to swallow and drink. When their hope of relief from their great thirst was completely dashed, they reacted in the same way as in the past. They complained against God and His servant Moses. Didn't they learn their lesson? Their true colours gave way again. In the space of just three short days, they have gone from singing and praising to now great murmuring and complaining.
4. When we faced with a “Marah” experience, there are two possible responses. We can either get bitter and give up on God or we can continue to believe the promises of the God's Word and walk by faith, and not by sight. Sadly, the children of Israel chose the first response.
5. However, Moses saved the day by doing the right thing. He prayed to the Lord for help. Verse 25, **“And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them.”** God answered Moses immediately by showing him a desert tree and told him to cut off a branch and throw it into the bitter water. God rebuked the people of Israel for their lack of faith and told them that this was a test for them. But they failed the test miserably.
6. God said to them in verse 26, **“... If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee. (that is Jehovah Rophe).”** God's permissive will shows trials and difficulties came not to destroy the people of God but that they may be driven to trust more in God's power and protection.

IV. SUMMARY

Are we suffering like Job? Are we complaining because of bitter water? Let us understand that this is the permissive will of God at work. Let us give thanks to Him because it is good for us spiritually. Do not doubt or complain. Let us remember Job's painful trials and the Marah experience because of God's permissive will. His will is to build us up and not destroy. May God 's Name be magnified and glorified when we respond with trust and faith by His good hand. May God help us. Amen.