

Title: Finding God in the Midst of Trials

Passage: Romans 8:28-39

Introduction:

Fact:

We live in a world with endless suffering, disease, evil, and trouble.

Questions:

Have you ever wondered why so much suffering?

How can we trust God in this world?

Answer:

God is both all powerful and all love. He can be trusted!

Context of Passage

- Chapters 1-8: review of truth that we were sinners but God sent His Son to die for our sins. In Christ, we are not only forgiven and reconciled to God, we are also children of God.

Romans 8:14-17

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Key Point: You are not alone - In Christ, you have the Holy Spirit

Ephesians 1:13

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,

Romans 8:26

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

- during any trial, you have the Holy Spirit with you.
- He knows your weaknesses and your needs.

John 14:26

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

I. GOD IS SOVEREIGN

Romans 8:28

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

And we know that for those who love God

- God is sovereign over all trials and sufferings

All things work together for good

- Key word: all
 - Both big and small details
- Key point: God is intentional and actively involved over everything in the universe

God is sovereign, in control over all things at all times

Matthew 10:29 (God is over all things however small)

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

Matthew 8:26-27 (God is over all natural world)

And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?"

Proverbs 16:33

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

Proverbs 21:1

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.

Amos 3:6

Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? Does disaster come to a city, unless the LORD has done it?

Isaiah 46:9-10

...for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'

Job 12:9-10

Who among all these does not know
that the hand of the LORD has done this?
In his hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of all mankind.

Daniel 2:20-21

Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;

Lamentations 3:37-38

Who has spoken and it came to pass,
unless the Lord has commanded it?
Is it not from the mouth of the Most High
that good and bad come?

Mark 1:27

And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."

- Contrast: Misperception of God that He comes only at specific times but not all the time.

Question: Do you believe things happen randomly in this universe? (Ex: natural disasters - forest fire consumes some but not others)

Truth: We are not God. No one is innocent before God apart from Christ. There is never lack of reason for things. No such thing as luck or chance.

- be very careful and mindful of unBiblical perspectives

Key Point: God is absolutely independent as He pleases and absolutely in control over all of His creatures. No such thing as luck or chance.

Isaiah 45:7

I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things.

Lamentations 3:38

Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?

- Hard circumstances will occur but never without reason or purpose

John 10:28

I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

- no one can act outside of the bounds of His will
- No one can act contrary to His will.

II. GOD IS ALWAYS JUST AND LOVING.

Romans 8:31

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

- God is always seeking His glory in the good of His children.

Question: How can God be for me when bad circumstances occur?

Answer: God's plan is bigger than just me and my comfortable life here on earth.

- In Christ, we are set for a better kingdom.
- God is preparing for us for something greater!
- God may pull us apart or pull us away to focus.
- We may not understand the reason for circumstances until we get to heaven.

Romans 8:29

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

- Why suffering? God wants us to refine us and conforms us to be like Christ
 - Ex: God may provide children to make you more patient. God may provide difficult boss or colleague to make you more gracious.

Reasons for Suffering

1. *Increase our usefulness and help us be able to comfort others in trials.*

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

2. *Keep us from becoming too comfortable in this world.*

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

3. *Produces Christian character.*

James 1:2-4

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

4. *Tests and strengthens our faith in God.*

1 Peter 1:6-7

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

5. *Create opportunities to be a witness for Christ.*

Philippians 4:12-13

I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

6. *Teach us our weaknesses and causes us to depend more on God.*

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

7. *Enlarge our appreciation of Jesus' sufficiency.*

Note: You may not know the real reason for suffering during this lifetime on earth. One day we will understand even in heaven.

Key Points:

- God's sovereignty is always out of holiness, wisdom, and power
 - God is never acting out of evil or evil intent.
- Contrast: man sovereignty - unsure out of justice and love because inherently sinful and frail.
- Even when "suffering" is allowed, it is for our good
 - Ex: when go to dentist there will be discomfort/pain but ultimately procedure is for good health.
- You don't know what you don't know.
 - We are still very limited in our perspective.

III. APPLICATION

Believe God is always in control and under his meticulous oversight.

- Everything is part of His plan. Somehow it will all make sense.
- Life is like the back of a confusing tapestry but we will one day see how it is all glorious and beautiful.
- Every ounce of suffering is part of God's plan.
- Ultimately suffering here is meant to be a picture of greater suffering
 - Even the worst suffering here in earth is not comparable to eternal suffering in hell.

God is fully trustworthy because He is good all the time.

Luke 11:11-13

What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Romans 8:32

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

- *Question:* Do you doubt God's goodness?
 - Answer: God is a good Father. He is for us, not against us.
- When we doubt God's love, look to the cross

Romans 5:8

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Colossians 3:2

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

Remember key truths:

- God is always sovereign.
- God is always just and loving.

- God is sufficient for all your needs.

Romans 8:38-39

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Trust in God and do not fear for your life. Don't be overpowered by your emotions.

- the worst thing that can happen to you is you die - and be with the Lord!
- Unless you are not sure if you are a believer.
 - If you trust in yourself for your salvation, that is wrong.
 - You can do nothing to bring about salvation.
 - You must rely on Christ alone by grace alone by faith alone.

Think of others: Be thoughtful and sensitive of others

Mark 12:31

The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Romans 12:12-13

Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

"Some of the rarest pearls have been found in the deepest waters, and some of the choicest utterances of believers have come from them when God's waves and billows have been made to roll over them....I have learned to kiss the waves that throw me against the Rock of Ages." (Charles Spurgeon)

Ephesians 3:20-21

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.