

Mt. Spokane Church

A HEART LIKE MINE

Discovering God's Will for Your Life

'What is Your Heart Disease?' - Message 8 of 8

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“Dealing with grief and loss is something most people have to do sometime in their lives. Grief is a natural response to the loss of someone or something very dear to us. Losses that may lead to grief include the death or separation of a loved one, loss of a job, death or loss of a beloved pet, or any number of other changes in life such as divorce, becoming an ‘empty nester,’ or retirement.”
[WebMD.com]

Grief:

- 1) Denial, numbness, and shock
- 2) Bargaining
- 3) Depression
- 4) Anger
- 5) Acceptance

These steps are similar to the order of chapters:

1. **In The Beginning** – We begin to recognize the trials surrounding us. A process begins that turns our world upside down. (Denial, Shock)
2. **Chasing the Wind** – Now comes the bargaining and searching for an end to our suffering.
3. **Isn't It Amazing** – Here is where we must acknowledge God's sovereignty.
4. **I surrender All** – And the bargaining must stop so we can let God be God.
5. **One is Not the Loneliest Number** – Sometimes the battle will cause depression.
6. **Ya Gotta' Laugh** – Even through all the tough times, joy can be found in any of our trials.
7. **I Am Who I Am** – Anger at what has happened can cause us to feel a loss of our self. We are still who we are—just slowly transformed into God's plan for us.
8. **Time Keeps On Ticking** – The time we suffer and passage of mile stones can also lead us to be angry. But time will lead to acceptance.
9. **What is Your Heart Disease?** – Now we come to a point of acceptance which really brings us strength in what God has for our life.

If you look at these steps, you can see the disposition of a trial or set of trials as they affect our lives. The Lord revealed this process to me as He directed me to form these chapters. And through His wisdom, I can now see the path He used to take me to a higher ground as the trials began to overwhelm my life.

Early on, the Lord showed me the three verses I refer to as my anchor verses. These are listed in the beginning of my book and I refer to them several times:

1. **Deal courageously**, and the LORD shall be with the good. (2 Chronicles 19:11b KJV)
2. **Do not grieve**, for the joy of the LORD is your strength. (Nehemiah 8:10b NIV)
3. **Beware of turning to evil**, which you seem to prefer to affliction. (Job 36:21 NIV)

The Lord wants us to be courageous in our trials. *Why?* Not only will the Lord be with us to see us through, but we can then show a hurting world around us that our GOD is able to hold us up in any storm.

The Lord does not want us to grieve. *Why?* Grief can only bring us turmoil and hold us back from moving forward. We are human, and we will encounter grief. But the strength of the Lord will take us through the process of grief in the twinkling of an eye and HIS Joy will be our strength.

The Lord does not want us to turn to evil. *Why?* All of us will go through or are going through a tough time in our lives. Painful, hurtful, disappointing, devastating times can push us to become cynical, angry, and bitter. But the evil from our reactions: anger, bitterness, depression, retaliation, will only hurt us and those around us. Where is the power of the Lord in such a witness?

“Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing.” (Philippians 2:14-16 NIV)

“Become blameless” is the exact language used by God to begin the renewal of the covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:1). The word refers to conduct with which one can “find no fault,” while “pure” is directed more toward the heart, not in the sense of “clean” but of “innocent.”

In order to shine like stars in a dark world, we can choose to run the race and work to rise above the trial and pain so that we ourselves will be redeemed and we will be found worthy to be an example of God’s power and love.

What are you struggling with today? How do you measure your pain and suffering? Are you dealing with insurmountable health trials? Financial ruin leaving you with no where to go to gain more resources? Children who are leaving or bringing distress to your very heart? Relationships that have brought regret? Loss of the security of a job? Fill in the blanks in the words Paul writes in Romans with your trial:

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble _____ or hardship _____ or persecution _____ or famine _____ or nakedness _____ or danger _____ or sword _____?

As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death _____ nor life _____, neither angels _____ nor demons _____, neither the present _____ nor the future _____, nor any powers _____, neither height _____ nor depth _____, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:31-38 NIV)

Do you feel like the trials before you are too hard to bear? Even though you read the Word of God, pray to Him for answers, do you still feel like He has given you more than you can deal with?

Look at the Old Testament patriarch Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a prophet who endured. He was faced with a long term task given to him by the Lord and he stuck to the Lord's request despite all the odds being against him. Jeremiah was called to be a prophet to the southern kingdom of Judah. Faced with opposition, Jerusalem's destruction, and imprisonment, Jeremiah remained obedient and courageous.

In Jeremiah chapter 36, the Lord asks Jeremiah to write down all the His messages for Israel. Jeremiah enlisted the help of a scribe named Baruch. Jeremiah was on house arrest, so he asked Baruch to go and read the scrolls in the temple. But King Jehoiakim heard of the scrolls and he called for Jehudi to bring the scrolls to him. He had Jehudi read 3 or 4 columns at a time and then he would take his knife, slice off the section and

throw it in the fire to burn it. The entire scroll, many years of work by Baruch and Jeremiah were destroyed.

But the Lord asked Jeremiah to once again, “Take another scroll and write on it all the words that were on the first scroll, which Jehoiakim king of Judah burned up.” Jeremiah 36:28 and the Lord even added more to what Jeremiah had already done:

“So Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to the scribe Baruch son of Neriah, and as Jeremiah dictated, Baruch wrote on it all the words of the scroll that Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire. And many similar words were added to them.” (Jeremiah 36:32 NIV)

Whatever has trapped you, imprisoned you, struck you down, squeezed you into a corner: can never separate you from the love of God and His will for your life.

What is your heart disease? What is troubling you today, right now? Do you feel too weak to bear the burden? Does your suffering seem pointless? Like Jeremiah, get up and do it again. Start each day new. Believe God always answers your cry for help.

And when you are feeling weak, do not let despair stop you from moving forward in God’s will for you. The disciples fell asleep when they should have been praying at Gethsemane.

“The sense of the irreparable is apt to make us despair, and we say – ‘It is all up now, it is no use trying any more.’ There are experiences like this in each of our lives. We are in despair, the despair that comes from actualities, and we cannot lift ourselves out of it. The disciples in this instance had done a downright unforgivable thing; they had gone to sleep instead of watching with Jesus, but He came with a spiritual initiative against their despair and said – ‘Arise and do the next thing.’ If we are inspired of God, what is the next thing? To trust Him absolutely and to pray on the ground of His Redemption.

Never let the sense of failure corrupt your new action.”

“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 about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:9,10 NIV)

How Suffering Affects Us:

Suffering is Harmful When:

- We become hardened and reject God
- We allow it to make us self-centered and selfish
- We withdraw from the help others can give
- We reject the fact that God can bring good out of our trial
- We accuse God of being unjust

Suffering is Helpful When:

- We turn to God for understanding, endurance, and deliverance
- We allow the suffering to help us identify with others and comfort them in their suffering
- We are open to be helped by others who are obeying God
- We are ready to receive the lesson from a trust in God
- We can identify with what Christ suffered on the cross for us

Job questioned God and why his suffering should continue. God's answer, after patiently waiting for Job and those around him to understand, was not an answer to Job's question, but instead, God wanted to show Job His mighty power and higher purpose. God answers Job with His own questions to reveal that God's ways are best for us. During difficult times we must remember our position before an incomprehensible God:

“Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?

Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder; To cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man; To satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth? Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew?

Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it?

Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?

Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go and say unto thee, Here we are?

Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart?

Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich?

Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?

Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south?

Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high?
(Job chapters 38-41)

And after so many illustrations the Lord presented to Job, he finally understood and acknowledged God:

“Then Job replied to the LORD: ‘I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, ‘Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?’ Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. ‘You said, ‘Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.’ My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.’” (Job 42:1-5 NIV)

If you never memorize any of the verses from Job—remember at least this one:

“In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.” Job 1:1

Job was blameless and upright—so too are you in the love of God.

What are you suffering with today? What is your heart disease? Is your heart troubled? Remember that suffering causes us to trust God for who He is, not what He can do. And our faith does not take us around our problems, it takes us through them!

“The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”
(Psalm 34:18 NIV)

