



COVENANT CHURCH

The Great Eight – Part 2

God is With Us

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Main Idea – God is with you in bad times just as much as He is with you in good times. God uses all things together to make you a stronger person, and for the best ultimate outcome.

The New Testament church under conflict

- All the letters the Apostle Paul wrote to the New Testament churches were written to congregations in conflict.
- They were dealing with persecutions from the Roman government, doctrinal challenges presented by Israelites who believed Old Testament rituals should still be followed, and harmful activities practiced by the godless, secular society of that time.
- Paul wrote the letter to the Roman Christians to tell them what God is like, what He had done for them, and how they were to respond with their personal conduct.
- Current day trials are providing many of us with challenges that are unique to history. Powerful conflicts and fears have emerged in the personal lives of many people.
- Paul's letter to the Roman Christians can also give you encouragement and guidance during tough times.
- Romans Chapter 8 gives encouragement that the plan God has for your future is going to far overshadow your present, difficult circumstances; and that God has instituted a super-natural formula that will mix the good and bad together, resulting in a superior outcome for you. **Romans 8:18 & 28 – For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us . . . And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (NKJV)**

Hope for the future

- Always focus on your hope for the future, knowing that God is with you and – if you allow Him - will guide you through life.
- **Psalm 23 – (1) The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. (2) He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, (3) he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. (4) Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they**

comfort me. (5) You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. (6) Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (NIV)

- Perhaps it is easy for some people to focus on the negative circumstances in Psalm 23. However, if one looks more closely at the verses, one will notice that only one verse (the fourth) is about struggle.
- Even when you are in one of life's valleys, you are only passing through. If you allow God to guide you, you won't stay in that valley for long.
- Hard times come to everyone. But, God's promise is that He will still be with you during those times.
- Don't focus on the negative circumstances in your life. Focus your attention on God.

The presence of problems does not mean an absence of God

- The Bible tells us that God created everything. From the very beginning God was present over the lack of form in the environment – and perhaps chaos – that preceded the first day of creation. **Genesis 1:1-2 – In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (NKJV)**
- If God was present at the creation, He certainly is still with you today.
- Stay focused on the Bible's promises that God will never forsake you.
- **Deuteronomy 31:6 – “Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.” (NKJV)**
- **Psalm 37:25 – I have been young, and am now old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread. (NKJV)**

Don't just *go* through it; *grow* through it!

- If you are in a tough spot right now, don't lose hope. Even though it may be difficult to sense God's presence, He is with you nevertheless.
- In the Old Testament, Job could not sense God but still concluded God was with him - and that he would ultimately be a better person because of the trial. **Job 23:8-10 – “Look, I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; when He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him; when He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him. But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. (NKJV)**
- With God, it is possible to actually be stronger and better after the trial than you were

before things started to go bad.

God created the earth knowing He would never leave you alone

- The Bible tells us the Messiah would be recognized as God with us in person. **Matthew 1:23 – “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.” (NKJV)**
- The Old Testament also has references to the Messiah being present with people in their times of trouble. **Daniel 3:23-25 – And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.” “Look!” he answered, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” (NKJV)**
- God is with you because of the pain. Joy comes from knowing your future happiness will far exceed the unhappiness of your current trials. **Hebrews 12:2 – looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (NKJV)**
- God will be with you in your ultimate victory. **1 Peter 1:6-7 – In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (NKJV)**

Your best and strongest days are still ahead of you

- If you are currently going through a difficult time, know that you will be a better and stronger person when the trial has passed.
- God will use you to His glory in ways He couldn't have used you before.
- As He makes use of the events of your life, God mixes together both the bitter and sweet to result in an excellent outcome. **Romans 8:18 - For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (NKJV)**
- Release to God control of your current situation. Don't hold onto stress; Jesus has already won victory over whatever is troubling you.
- Let Jesus mix together all your experiences so that you will be a stronger, better person; resulting in outcomes that give glory to Him and accomplish His will.

Reflective Questions for The Great Eight – Part 2

1. Select - and discuss - a Bible verse from this sermon that helps explain why bad things happen to good people.
2. Pastor Creg pointed out that the 23rd Psalm contains five positive verses and only one negative verse. How closely does that ratio apply to the mix of good and bad events that happen in your own life?
3. Hebrews 12:2 (above) says that Jesus had joy during his trials because he knew the outcome of the greater good purpose of his life. Do you have a sense of what is the greater good purpose of your own life? If so, how does that awareness keep you mostly positive during difficult times?
4. Even during your weaker moments – when you might not have the most optimistic mindset – which of the Bible verses in this lesson might help you see God's purpose in your circumstances?