

Embrace the Journey1 **“Last Year...Good or Bad?”**

Along with resolutions, new years also bring with them, “fond farewells” for the previous year. A year, in the rearview, gives us a distinct advantage of liking, or not liking, what it chronicled in our lives; the reason...because we’ve already lived it. In contrast, the new year is almost always seen with hopeful expectations because it has yet to disappoint us. The new year isn’t old enough yet to deliver its standard “ups and downs” of real life. Often, we are optimists at the starting line of a calendar and I like that, but as I see it, it’s not life yet if it hasn’t been lived. What is it? Its scheduled living and our calendars did it for us without even asking.

As we begin a new message series today, we also continue a personal journey that we are each on separately, yet simultaneously. It’s our life and somehow, as it happens, we appropriate it as “good” or “bad”. If God is Sovereign (and I believe He is), then is it really “bad” if He allows it, whatever “it” is, for our good? It’s a question to ponder, and don’t be in a hurry; you have all of your life to answer.

So Life Happens

- Good and bad things happen to all people; even Christ followers.
- Some Christ followers think/believe that God insulates them from bad things.
- The Law of Gravity is consistent with everyone.
- Some pastors teach that when bad things happen to believers, it’s in part due to a lack of faith of the believer. So they blame the believer to “protect” God’s character.
- It is also true that our poor choices create circumstances that we expect God to be responsible, i.e., the law of sowing and reaping.
- Apart from the theology of it all, if we believe in God, we often hold Him accountable for the bad things that appear in our lives. Is this a correct or fair response?

So How Does God Operate?

- Scripture reveals what we know of the character of God.
- Our life experiences confirm what Scripture teaches.
- It’s important that we shape our view of God based on His Word and not just on our anecdotal perspective.
- Yes, God can, and does at times, intervene in our normal lives.

Romans 8:28 NAS

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

So Some Realignment May Be In Order

Jeremiah 29:11 NAS (New American Standard)

'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.

Jeremiah 29:11 NIV (New International Version)

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Jeremiah 29:11 *ESV (English Standard Version)*

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Jeremiah 29:11-13 *NAS*

11 *For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

12 *Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.*

13 *You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*

-There is great danger in developing a theological view based on one verse; its done all the time and we often dismiss it as just "another way to interpret" the verse. It's important to see the full picture of Who God is and how He operates in Scripture, the world, and our personal lives.

So What Are The Take Aways?

-We live in a sin-infested world where bad things happen to us.

-Under God's Sovereignty (control), He allows bad things to happen to us (including Christians).

-Within a relationship with Him (through Jesus), God causes even the bad things to work in a good way in His plans and our lives.

-We mistakenly look at our circumstances and see God rather than believing the truth about Who God is and seeing our circumstances and His purpose for them.

Bottom Line – Difficult days or periods in our life should not be hurried out of; they should be squeezed of their Sovereign's intention.