

" WHEN GOD DOESN'T MAKE SENSE"

OT - Psalm 44, Verses 23 through 26

NT - 1st Corinthians Chapter 13, verse 12.

When our little granddaughter, ^(PAULA KAY) was told that her beloved "Nana" had gone to be with God and Jesus, and she would not be seeing "Nana" ████████ here on earth ever again, she listened to this incomprehensible news, and then looked up into her daddy's face and said, "It's not fair. It's just not fair."

Those words spoken by one of Kay's granddaughters said it all for Kay's family and friends. It wasn't fair! How could God allow so many unloving, nasty, vile people live, thrive and prosper and at the same time ~~allow~~ ^{TO BE PLAUGED} this beautiful woman with an insidious disease that finally took her life in such a short time that it even astounded and confounded her doctors. How could this happen when literally hundreds of people were praying for her all over this country?

Well, when everything is going well...when disease, disappointment and sorrow are way off someplace in the background it's easy to believe that life is good, carefree and happy...that God is in His heaven and all is right with the world. (But) everyone here today has already, or will experience difficulties in life that are not easy to understand. At those times, particularly at the time of the death of a loved one, the pieces of life's puzzle simply will not fit together, and God does not make any sense at all. Most of us are inclined, in those moments of grieving struggle, to ask the most troubling question in human experience...How could God let this happen?!

When we are engulfed and overwhelmed in a life crisis, it's common to feel a great emptiness and a great frustration with God. Our inability to figure out what His intentions are...what and why He's doing these things creates another agitated question...WHY?!...The WHY question, which even Jesus asked from the cross, is often left unanswered for years, or even for a lifetime. Some believers are so shaken by their inability to understand their circumstances that they feel a profound abandonment by God. This "betrayal barrier" is a dangerous weapon employed by Satan who delights when we feel that our compassionate Lord has abandon us...does not even hear our prayers...is off someplace else, -where we do not
know.

Soon after Kay died, our daughter Pam gave me a book entitled "When God Doesn't Make Sense" written by Dr. James Dobson, one of America's leading Christian family counselors... founder and president of Focus on the Family, and educational organization with 52 separate ministries, each dedicated to the preservation of the home and family. Dr. Dobson, a licensed psychologist, marriage, family and child counselor for over 24 years is heard on over 4,000 radio broadcasting facilities around the world. His organization publishes 8 magazines read by over 3 million people monthly. He has been an advisor to three U.S. presidents, served on the faculty of the University of Southern California School of Medicine for 14 years and on the attending staff of Childrens Hospital of Los Angeles for 17 years.

Quoting from the dust cover... "When God Doesn't Make Sense" is a book lovingly addressed to those who are left confused, and disillusioned by life's difficulties. It is intended to nurture a faltering faith, to prevent the downhearted and dispirited from falling into the clutches of despair." The comments in this morning's message come from the Bible with help from this book.

In his book Dr. Dobson's message boils down to this very simple understanding... There is nothing our Lord wants of us more than to exercise our faith and trust in Him. He —
GOD — will do nothing to undermine that faith and trust. Our faith is believing that which has no absolute proof. It is hanging tough when all the evidence and circumstances would have us bail out and quit. It is firmly deciding to trust God even when He has not provided answers to our questions.

What is trust? I'm sure you've heard the story about the tight rope walker who was getting ready to walk a tighrope across Niagra Falls pushing a wheelbarrow before him. He asked those watching if they thought he could do " Oh, yes." thay said. " You've done similar feats before. You will have no trouble. The wind is calm. All is ready go ahead. We have faith in your ability to do it." " Fine!" he said. "Which one of you will ride in the wheelbarrow?"

There is no better illustration of this trustful faithfullness than is seen in the 11th Chapter of Hebrews verses 35 through 40. Described therein are men and women who persevered in their faith under the most extreme circumstances. They suffered every kind of hardship for the **SAKE OF THE CROSS,**

Some were tortured, imprisoned, flogged, stoned, sawed in half and put to death in other hideous ways. They were destitute, mistreated and persecuted. They wandered in the deserts and in the mountains. They existed in caves and in holes in the ground...and they died not receiving what had been promised them. Even so they held on to their faith and trusted God to the point of death even though God had not explained to them what He was doing.

There is the story of a man who was driving his truck on a steep, narrow mountain road. To his right was a canyon that dropped over 500 feet almost straight down. As he rounded a curve he lost control of the truck. It plunged over the side and bounced down the canyon wall bursting into flames as it hit the bottom. The driver was ejected from the ~~truck~~^{TRUCK} as it went over the edge of the canyon and he managed to grab a bush growing out of the canyon wall near the top. After trying to pull himself up for several minutes he called out..."Is anybody there?!" In a few seconds the thundering voice of the Lord echoed down through the canyon..."Yes, I am here, The man pleaded..."Please save me! I can't hold on much longer." After what seemed to be a long, agonizing pause the Lord spoke again..."I will save you, but first you must let go of your hold on that bush. My hands will be under you. I will catch you." The terrified man looked over his shoulder down the canyon wall to see his truck burning in the valley below, and then he called out in a plaintive little voice..." Is there anybody else there?"

We must remember. God is present, and involved in our lives even when He seems to be on an extended vacation. We must remember that for reasons that are impossible to explain, we - you and I are incredibly precious to God. We are His children. He loves each and every one of us. It is the breathtaking revelation in the Scriptures that our God knows each one of us personally. There is simply no way to comprehend the full implications of this love by the all powerful King of Kings and Lord of Lords. It is overwhelming to even attempt comprehension. Why should He have concern for us as individuals...be concerned for our needs, our welfare, our suffering, our fears.?

Job, a man who knew loss and suffering first hand, also had great difficulty understanding why our Great Creator would be interested in us humans. At one point in his questioning God he asked... "What is man that you make so much of him...that you give him so much attention...that you examine him every morning?" That comes from the 7th Chapter, the 17th and 18th verses.

David contemplated the same puzzling question when he wrote in the 8th Psalm, 4th verse... "What is man that You are mindful of him, the son of man that you are for him?" And, again in Psalm 139... "Oh Lord, you have searched me, and You know me. You know when I sit and when I rise. You perceive my thoughts from afar. You know my going out and my lying down. You are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely."...Not only is our Lord mindful of each one of us, but throughout the Scriptures He describes Himself as "our Father". In Luke 11th chapter, 13th verse we read... "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him."...Psalm 103 says... "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who revere Him."...In Isaiah the 66 chapter, 13th verse He is likened to a mother... "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you."

Being a parent of four children ^{WITH} ~~and~~ 8 grandchildren I can identify with these parental analogies. They help me to comprehend how God feels about us. I pray for our children and grandchildren every day. They are never far from my thoughts. I am vulnerable to their pains and problems. God loves us - His human family infinitely more

than we can express to our own flesh and blood...our children and grandchildren. That's what God's word teaches us.

There is a story About a man who was sentenced to be confined in solitary confinement in a pitch black cell devoid of any light whatsoever. The only thing he had to occupy his time was a marble. He spent hours tossing the marble against the walls of the cell and listen to it as it bounced and rolled around in the darkness. then he would grope around in the darkness on his hands and knees until he found his precious toy...

One day, for no good reason, he threw the marble upward...and it didn't come down. Only a crushing silence settled on the cell. He strained to hear the familiar sound of the marble rolling on the floor...but only silence. He became deeply disturbed by the aparent "evaporation" of this precious marble which had helped him keep his sanity while in this dreadful place. He was even more disturbed because he could not explain the marble's disapperance. He thrashed wildly about the cell in the darkness trying to find it. He finally went totally berserk and injured himself to the point of death.

When the guards came to remove his body one of them noticed something caught in a huge spider web up in the upper corner of the cell..." That's strange.", he thought, I wonder how a marble got up there?"

This story illustrates that our human perceptions sometimes pose questions that our little human minds are incapable of answering. But, valid answers always exist. As followers of Jesus Christ, it makes good sense not to depend too heavily on our abilities to make all of life's pieces fit...especially when trying to figure out our

Almighty God. ↪

6

Human perception is a highly flawed, imprecise instrument at best. Our emotions are even less reliable. They have the dependability and consistency of silly putty. ...especially in times of trial, loss and stress. ^{OUR} Emotions wobble dramatically from early morning when we are rested to late evening when we are tired. An evidence of emotional maturity is the ability to overcome these wide fluctuations and govern our behavior with intellect and will.

*And I know that
scripture that
is easier said
than done.*

Understanding our relationship with God is extremely important. Even when He seems to be a thousand miles away and seemingly uninterested in our affairs, He is close enough to touch us. Luke 24, verses 13 and 14 recount two of Jesus disciples walking along the road to Emmaus. They had seen their Master horribly crucified only three days before. Everything they had hoped for died on that cruel Roman cross. Jesus had spoken with such authority. He claimed to be the Son of Man sent by God...the Son of God they called Him. But, they had heard Him cry out on the cross..." My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me!?" The disciples couldn't have been more confused and despondent.

What they did not realize was that Jesus was walking that lonesome, dusty road with them...every moment...every step, and they were about to receive the greatest news ever heard by human ears. He lives! Jesus lives!...and that astounding news would revolutionize and revitalize their lives and turn the world up side down forever.

Now, if you find yourself traveling down your own hard, dry, dusty Emmaus Road today...if the concerns and circumstances in your life have left you lonely, desolate, depressed and confused...here's good news for you!

Never assume that your Heavenly Father's silence and aparent inactivity in your life is evidence of His absense or disinterest. Remember! His word is infinitely more reliable than our spookey little emotions. Remember!
(IN MATTHEW 28 / VERSE 20)
 He said..."Lo, I am with you always...even unto the end of the ~~earth~~ ^{WORLD}". Our Lord is at work in our lives in His own unique way...even when our prayers seem to echo back from an empty universe. So, believe! Have faith in the Lord God who gave you life. Trust Him! His eyes are on you constantly. He hears your prayers, and He will answer.

Let us pray.

Father God, Master of the Universe, hear our prayers this day, and in all the days to come. Let us rejoice in your presense in our lives. Give us the grace and the abiding faith to remember You and worship You in our good times, and the rock-solid trust to be still and know that you are God at work in our lives in our bad times. Go with us as we leave this sanctuary. Guide us all of our days until we shall better understand your purposes when we meet you face to face...(IN JESUS NAME WE PRAY) Amen.