

"Does Jesus Care?"

Life can suddenly become harsh, causing us to question whether the Lord cares about us. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders and this is a Bible study in search of the Lord's Way. When I'm hurting, does Jesus care about me? Stay with us for an encouraging answer.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! You might want to call a friend and tell him about the program. We're here searching God's Word. We have no doubt that the Bible will give us the truth, so we keep on looking to it for the answers. Our goal is to please God because we love Him and we want to be close to Him. We also want to be a part of your life each week.

Longing to be close to God is natural, especially when you're hurting. The sons of Korah in Psalm 42 described the heartache of longing for God. "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?' "

When tough times come, many feel God is distant. They wonder if the Lord is watching or if He cares. They long for God's help and comfort. Does Jesus care when our hearts are broken with grief, when the bills pile up, when the children are hungry, or when we can't seem to get well? Does God know what you're going through and hear your prayers?

Nothing escapes the notice of God. Luke 12 and verse 6 says that not even a sparrow can fall to the ground apart from God's knowledge. God not only sees what happens outwardly, He can also see the troubles inside your heart. He knows all about you, because He created you. He knows your every need and knows your every heartache. There's never been a single moment in your life when God has closed His heart and not wanted to be close to you and bless you.

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The Edmond church will now worship in song, and then we'll read from Mark 4:35 to 39 and see just how much Jesus cares.

Our reading today gives us some details about an event in the life of Jesus. They come from Mark chapter 4 verses 35 to 39.

On that day, when evening came, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.

That's a reading from God's holy Word. Let's pray together. Oh Father we're thankful that You can calm the storms that are in our lives as well. Help us to our trust in You in all things. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

Frightening, life-threatening storms happened suddenly on the sea of Galilee. And in this storm Jesus is asleep, with "his head on a cushion." The disciples cry out "Master, don't you care that we are perishing?" Well, we all ask questions like this, and we need an answer. We see the world's agonies

and wonder if God is paying attention. We need help from Someone bigger than we are and we need His help now.

Jesus didn't answer their question immediately. Instead He rebuked the storm and made the water calm. And then Jesus asked the disciples, "How is it that you have no faith?" You know in so many cases of life, the question is not whether God cares but whether we believe.

Of course Jesus cares. Mark, chapter five, describes how the Lord Jesus delivered Legion, a demon-possessed man who lived like a beast, in the first 20 verses. Later in the chapter Jesus heals a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, verses 25 to 34 and then later on He raised the daughter of Jairus, verses 35 to 43.

Now someone objects, "But why doesn't God stop every problem? Why is it the Lord seems asleep and uncaring?" Well, here is the assumption: that if God doesn't stop all our problems that He doesn't really care about us. We want God to keep us free from any struggles or difficulties. Well, it's tempting to question God's love when we face challenges or disappointments. We think if God loves us, that He will protect us from any and every problem.

But is a painless world, free from any problems, really the best for us? Now it may be convenient and comfortable, but is it best for our character? Doesn't the person who faces no problems and gets everything his own way think that the whole world revolves around him?

Challenges shape us into people of character. James 1 verses 2 to 4 says, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." Now we may see trials and struggles the wrong way. God permits them, because He sees a greater good with them than without them. Struggles help us become the strong people that God desires. So let's rejoice in our trials, because God uses them to mold us into His people.

James 1 and verse 12 says, "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." Now it doesn't say, "Blessed is the man who has no troubles" but "blessed is the man who perseveres under trial." He's the man who won't quit on God on a rough day. Because he loves God even in tough times, God will reward him with the crown of life.

The Lord demonstrates that He cares. You might ask the question well, "How?" Well, first, He shows that He understands suffering in that He himself suffered for our sins. That He Himself endured the punishment that rightfully was our own. 1 Peter 2 and verse 24 says, that "He Himself bore our sins in His body, it was personal, and He did it 'on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed."

God loved His Son Jesus, but He didn't stop the crucifixion. Jesus prayed with tears in the Garden to let this cup pass, but God sacrificed His Son because He loved you and me, just as He loved His Son. Now atoning for sin was more important to Jesus Himself than freedom from suffering. Have you considered how greatly our Father suffered in sacrificing His Son? No one has grieved over human evil more than God Himself has. No one has suffered more than Jesus, who bore the cross for our sins. He showed unmistakably how much He loved us. Now this loving God asks us to trust Him when we and our loved ones cry out for help.

1 Peter 2 verses 21 to 23 says, "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but He kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." This is what the

disciples in the boat needed to do and what we need to do: entrust our souls to God! 1 Peter 5 and verse 7 urges us to cast "all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you."

God inspired the apostle Paul to write the book of Romans before the Christians began facing great persecution. Paul asked in Romans 8 and verse 35, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.'"

Paul answers the question in verses 37 to 39, he says "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure, I'm convinced, '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.'" Well their problems did not separate them from the love of God, and my friend, your problems won't separate you either.

Now God didn't stop the apostles from being beaten, He didn't stop Stephen from being stoned, and He didn't stop James from being beheaded by the sword. God didn't keep Paul from imprisonment. They knew God would stand by them, yes. And suffering may tempt us to quit on God. Let's remember 1 Corinthians 10 verse 13 says, that "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted or tested beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."

Now these temptations or tests don't single us out but they're are common. We all suffer, and that suffering can challenge our faith. God isn't hiding when the trials come. He is faithful! You can trust Him! Now nothing that you encounter today, nothing tomorrow, or nothing at any time will ever be bigger than what God and you together can handle. He doesn't remove all of our problems, but God does give us the strength and the ability to bear those challenges and those temptations and those tests. When that problem gets so big that we can't handle it, God makes a way of escape so that we'll never get overcome by it.

Now God sometimes uses the physical struggles that we face to keep us from doing ourselves spiritual harm. God gave to the apostle Paul some tremendous, miraculous revelations to help him in his ministry. But God didn't want Paul to exalt himself, and so He gave him "a thorn in the flesh" to torment him and keep him from exalting himself, 2 Corinthians 12 and verse 7. Well, Paul prayed three times for the Lord to take away his "thorn in the flesh"; but God refused and said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."

Paul realized that this thorn was not going away. Was he bitter? No. He learned something valuable: that God's power is perfected, made stronger, in weakness. Paul said, "Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, he says, 'I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong'", verses 9 and 10. You see struggles remind us that we need God. Many folks think that they can manage without God, but in our darkest moments we see how much we really need God.

God's grace is indeed sufficient. Yes it is. And suffering may torment your body, but it can't take away your soul away. Suffering may open up for you an opportunity to see the great power of God to help you sustain yourself even in times of weakness. Jesus does indeed care. And just as Jesus wept with Mary and Martha at the death of Lazarus, so He weeps with us. The Lord knows when we hurt and He provides comfort and strength that we need, to overcome.

Now sometimes people continue to ask, "Why the Lord doesn't stop all evil right now?" But if the Lord stopped all evil, wouldn't that also include the evil that you do? You know if we ask God to stop all evil, we need to consider the wrongs that we do. Your sin hurts, it hurts God, it hurts you, and it hurts others. The Lord patiently loves you enough to lead you to a better way. He asks you to change your life by repenting.

Now repentance is not punishment but healing. The Lord knows that there is a better person inside of you, wanting to come out. He knows that your repentance will not only bless your life but bless all the people that you touch. Now when you come to Christ and stop the old way of sin, you bless people that you formerly hurt. He graciously gives us time to repent. 2 Peter 3 and verse 9 says, that "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

Now Jesus loved you and gave you the righteous example to follow. He showed us how to forgive and how to be forgiven. He gave us his Word to guide our lives. And He could say: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Matt. 11 verses 28 to 30

Times of crisis call for the best in people. Bravery, heroism, love, self-sacrifice—all of these things flourish in times of crisis. Now people who exhibit such traits are cherished and honored as having gone "above and beyond the call of duty." Was this not the very point that Christ was making when He said: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" John 15:13?

The most important question is not well "why did this happen to me?" but rather "what shall I do now?" Some reject God and abandon Him when sorrow comes their way. Some turn inward in self-pity. Others exercise their faith and find that God has not forgotten them. They entrust their souls to Him and find His promise is true: which says "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." Romans 8 and verse 28.

Now not everything that happens to us is good; but let's not assume that the only way that God can care for us is to prevent our troubles. God also shows His care by taking the harshest things in our lives and using them for good, not only to bless us but also to bless others. God has the power to prevent, yes; and we have no idea all the harm from which He has protected us already. But God also has the power to take the things that are at their worst and make good out of them. He can also do that for you.

And instead of blaming God for pain, look to Him for strength. Struggles remind us that God never intended this world to be our home. We are pilgrims, and our lives here are brief. Paul said in Romans 8 and verse 18, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." Oh we too must learn to see with the eye of faith and trust. The last chapter of our lives has not yet been written. When Jesus comes again, He will bless and comfort His own.

Let's pray together. Oh Father we're thankful for the love that You give us every day of our lives. And how You have protected us from evil and how You have turned evil into good. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

Jesus cares about you. He wants to be your friend. He cares about your physical welfare, your finances, about your family, and about your future. More than anything, Jesus cares about your soul.

The Lord Jesus knows all about you, the good and the bad. He even knows the number of hairs upon your head. And in spite of it all, He loves you and He cares greatly about every detail of your life.

Sometimes we concentrate so much on our longing for God to act that we forget God is longing for a relationship with us. The Lord deeply desires that we draw close to Him. And when we forget Him or get caught up in sin, He yearns for His people to come back. The Lord Jesus died on the cross for sinful people, yearning to have a relationship with them.

Do you have a close, loving relationship with God? Does the Lord see you as someone who is devoted to Him? In your quiet moments as you look into your heart, do you see yourself as a friend to God? If you have not given yourself to the Lord, today is the right day to come to Him. Come to the Lord in faith, trusting in Him and His Word. Confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. And in repentance, make Jesus your Lord; let Him rule your life.

Having done these things, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And in baptism the Lord will cleanse you from sin, Acts 22 and verse 16, He'll cause you to be born again, John 3 and verse 5, He'll give you newness of life, Romans 6 and verse 4. And in baptism the Lord will also add you to His church, Acts 2 and verse 47.

Now when you become a Christian you'll find the strength and grace to deal with all of life's struggles. God cares enough to give us the strength to bear what He does not take away. Trust Him. Trust Him.

Well we hope you've been blessed by today's study of God's Word. If you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

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