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God Makes the Difference in our Struggles

By Pastor Steve Calagna

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (Romans 5:3-5)

I ran into a person the other day that I had not seen for a long time. After exchanging pleasantries, the person told me that she was going through “something” and started to cry. Then she turned and walked away saying, “I will just have to live with it.” It was obvious she was in deep emotional pain.

What I wanted to say, but she was already out of earshot, was that I myself had found God to be a great comfort in my own struggles. However, I stopped and asked myself, “How was God a great comfort to me? He didn’t exactly take away my pain, nor did He make the problem go away.” In fact, how does God make a difference in the struggles of life? I know we want Him to take away our pain, but that is rarely the way God works. What difference does God make in our lives anyway?

The Book of Acts gives many examples of how we can expect God to work in our lives. There is one thing clear though; how God works is different in almost every circumstance. In one instance He allows King Herod to kill James the Apostle. In another instance, He delivers Peter the Apostle supernaturally, and sets him free to continue his ministry for a season. In one instance, He allowed Paul to be beaten and imprisoned. In another, to avoid capture, Paul is rescued by being secreted out of town by his friends.

This is hard for us because what we really want is a God who changes our circumstances; fixes the problem; takes away our pain. What we have is a God who walks with us through circumstances. Sometimes He changes them, but that is not the greatest help He gives. His greatest help is to give eternal meaning to our struggle. He gives meaning in the midst of what feels like chaos, and purpose to our plight.

Human beings can walk through just about anything if they see there is a purpose. Even if that purpose is not understood, to be able to trust that God can use any circumstance for good and to further His purposes is a huge source of comfort. It is when a person loses meaning (purpose, hope) that despair sets in. That does not mean that God causes everything to happen, but that when circumstances are turned over to Him, He can bring good out of anything. Our part is to trust Him. Despair is actually the absence of trust!

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God has demonstrated His love and faithfulness once and for all in the death and resurrection of Christ. He is trustworthy! If He gave so much to bring you to Him, can you not trust Him to work in your own circumstances? Let faith arise in you and with it the resulting hope. Hope will not disappoint.