

A Reason for Being

Philippians 1:12-14, 19-30

Introduction

Last week, we talked about how “God is good, all the time; and all the time, God is good.” We also said that God is in control and He’s working *all things together for good to those who love the Lord, who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28)*. This is part of the answer to the age-old question of Theodicy: “If God is all-powerful and all-loving, as you say, then why do bad things happen to good people”? The human reasoning goes like this: If God is all-powerful, He can do anything He wants. If He is all-loving, He will only want to do good to His people. Therefore, only good things should happen to good people. Since bad things happen to good people, God must either not be all-loving or all-powerful.

Flawed Logic

Of course, this logic is flawed on several levels. 1) It assumes people can be **good**. For humans, “good” is a **relative** term. For God, it’s an **absolute**. *“No one is good except God alone”* (Jesus, in **Mark 10:18**). All people are inherently evil since we are all fallen in sin. 2) It assumes a view of “love” that is non-biblical. Human love is about **feelings** and making the other person **feel** good. Divine love is about doing what is **right**, and sometimes, what is right is painful. 3) It assumes to know the **mind** of God. In our OLD TESTAMENT reading, we heard, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9)*. In **Jeremiah 29:11**, we read, *“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.”* God has a **plan** for us, and He will do whatever He has to do to work that plan out, even if it **hurts**. 4) It assumes that all suffering is **evil**. Paul says in **verse 29** of our text, *For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.* We are **granted** the **privilege** of suffering with and for Christ.

The Question

The question remains, “If God has a plan for my life, can I know it?” Wouldn’t it make sense for God to let me in on the plan? Then I could make decisions in my life that would go along with it. It would be much easier that way than not knowing God’s plan and always having to change directions.

The Answer

The answer to that question is “Yes ... and No.” **“No”**, because it would **not** be good for us to know ahead of time where God wants us to be. I can see now that God wanted me to be a Lutheran pastor. If He had revealed that to me when I graduated high school, wouldn’t that have been easier and better? No. it may have been easier, but **easier** does not translate into **better**. I wouldn’t have the experiences and the background I do today. I wouldn’t be the same man who stands before you now. God worked with me and led me in the decisions I made at different junctions in my life to make me who I am, who He wants me to be. **“Yes”**, because He gives us an overview in our text today.

Paul's Way

Paul says in **verse 21**, *For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*. Dying is gain because it brings us to God's greatest purpose for all of us, to spend eternity with Him. But what does "*to live is Christ*" mean? Paul says that life in Christ means *fruitful labor*. And although he'd rather go to be with God, he knows that his remaining is **necessary** for the **sake** of the Philippians. He remains **on their account**. Paul's reason for being is his responsibility to those to whom he is called to minister.

We Have Responsibilities, Too

Just because we aren't apostles doesn't mean we are exempt from responsibilities. We have people to whom we are to minister. Who has God placed in our life? Family, friends, work or school associates, people we meet from day to day? These are our responsibilities, our ministry, our reason for being. God has placed us here to **love** and **serve** other people. When someone dies, we should remember this passage. And instead of asking, "Why did God take him or her"? we should ask, "Why has God **left** me here"? The deceased has gone to receive their final reward. Why has God left me? Who am I responsible for? Whom does He want me to serve? And **how**?

The Cross as Our Focus

The answer to that final question is found in the cross of Jesus Christ. Paul says, *to live is Christ*. We fulfill our reason for being in Christ and Him crucified. When we receive the **MEANS OF GRACE**, we receive His love and power to love our neighbor and serve them for Christ. He gives us our **REASON FOR BEING**.

*May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
