

Sermon Notes for May 16, 2010

**Sermon Series On
Trials in the Christian Life
“Dealing With Our Trials” – Part IV
Romans 8:28-30**

Chippie the parakeet was simply minding his own business and singing his song one day when his owner decided to clean out his cage with the vacuum cleaner. The phone rang and the lady went to answer it. That was when things began to go horribly wrong for little Chippie. Without the guidance his owner, the vacuum cleaner sucked up the bird and sent him to the dust bag.

Realizing what had happened, the woman tore open the vacuum and ripped apart the bag to find Chippie, fearing the worst. However, Chippie was not dead but merely stunned and covered with dust.

The woman decided that Chippie needed to be revived and ran to the bathroom sink. She turned the water on and stuck Chippie under the flow. Now, Chippie was cold and wet from the sudden bath. So the owner decided to dry the bird off but not with a towel. She got out her hair dryer and blew the bird off.

Chippie went from being sucked up, to nearly drown, to being blown over. The owner was asked by a friend a few weeks later how Chippie was doing. The owner replied: **“Chippie doesn’t sing much anymore, he just sits and stares.”**

Introduction

A. WHY IS LIFE SO HARD?

1. How do you explain 9/11?
2. What happens when tornados ravage a community?
3. How can you understand the devastation that just hit Nashville?
4. How do we respond to:
 - a. to heart attacks?
 - b. cancer?
 - c. death?

B. AND . . . WHERE IS GOD WHEN LIFE IS HARD?

1. Is God “asleep at the wheel?”
 - a. Does He even know what is going on?
 - b. And does He even know what is going on with me?
2. well, let me assure you . . .
 - a. **GOD IS DEFINITELY THERE**
 - b. **AND HE KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT IS GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE.**
 - c. in fact, as we will see today
 1. not only is God aware of what is going on in your life!

2. **HE IS ACTIVELY AT WORK IN YOUR LIFE USING EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS IN YOUR LIFE TO MAKE YOU MORE LIKE JESUS.**
3. today, we are going to look at **Romans 8:28**
 - a. one of the greatest passages in all of Scripture
 - b. a verse that will clearly tell all of us “just” how involved God is in all of our lives as believers.

I. The CONFIDENCE OF THE BELIEVER IN TRIALS

A. Our FEAR IN TRIALS

1. “Why is this happening to me?”
2. “Have I done something to deserve this trial?”
3. and . . . “WHERE IS GOD WHEN I AM GOING THROUGH THIS TRIAL?”

B. The FACT OF OUR TRIALS

1. The **understanding** of our knowledge in trials
 - Vs 28** – “And we **know** that in all things God works for the good”
 - a. we do not have to wonder where God is during our trials
 - b. WE CAN KNOW WHERE GOD IS!**
 - c. the definition of “to know”
 1. to understand
 2. to perceive
 3. to know by expression
 - d. Paul is saying that the believer can absolutely rest on the **FACT** that God is **AWARE OF OUR TRIALS**
2. The **unity** of our knowledge in trials
 - Vs. 28** – “And **we** know that in all things God works for the good”
 - a. all believers can clearly state that we know that God is aware of our trials **BECAUSE WE HAVE EXPERIENCED HIS AWARENESS.**
 - b. the words “we know” suggest that believers know this fact “by personal experience”, as in knowing by our “senses”**
 1. yes, it is true that the Word of God teaches that God is aware of our trials
 2. but this word “know” suggests more than mental understanding
 - a. believers “know” that God is aware and involved in our trials
 1. **BECAUSE WE HAVE “SENSED” HIM IN OUR TRIALS**
 2. we have felt His presence in our trials
 3. we have been supported by Him in our trials
 - b. and the “we” suggests that this is not an isolated experience by a few of us

**1. ALL OF US WHO ARE BELIEVERS
HAVE SENSED, FELT AND
EXPERIENCED THE INVOLVEMENT OF
GOD IN OUR LIVES DURING OUR
TRIALS**

2. ISN'T THAT SO!

3. You should not have to tell a believer that God is involved in his trials
- a. DUH!
 - b. I love what the British Preacher, **Charles Spurgeon** said about knowledge: "I don't need anyone to tell me how honey tastes. **I know.**"
4. So, let us settle this once and for all. **GOD IS FULLY AWARE OF EVERYTHING THAT HIS CHILDREN ARE GOING THROUGH.**
- a. **SO DON'T BE BASHFUL ABOUT DEPENDING ON GOD DURING TIMES OF TRIALS**
 - b. In the early days of our country a weary traveler came to the banks of Mississippi River for the first time. (There was no bridge, of course.) **It was early winter, and the surface of the mighty river was covered with ice.** Could he dare cross over? Would the uncertain ice be able to bear his weight?

Night was falling, and it was urgent that he reach the other side. Finally, after much hesitation and with many fears, he began to creep cautiously across the surface of the ice on his hands and knees. He thought that he might distribute his weight as much as possible to keep the ice from breaking beneath him. About halfway over he heard the sound of singing behind him. **Suddenly a man, driving a horse-drawn load of coal across the ice, came flying by him on the ice singing merrily as he went his way.** Here this man was; on his hands and knees, trembling because he thought that the ice was not strong enough to bear him and then came this man and his carriage, his horses, sleigh, and his load of coal, being supported by the same ice on which the man was creeping! Don't "crawl" when you go through trials. **STAND TALL AND DEPEND ON GOD!**

II. The COMPLETENESS FOR THE BELIEVER IN TRIALS

A. We Know THAT GOD WORKS IN OUR TRIALS

Vs. 28 – "And we know that in all things **God works** for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

1. NOT ONLY IS GOD “AWARE” OF OUR TRIALS, HE IS ACTUALLY “ACTIVE” OR “WORKING” IN OUR TRIALS

- a. notice what the verse says: “For we know that in all things God **works** for the good.”
- b. DID YOU NOTICE THAT?
 1. God is not a bystander in our lives and trials
 2. HE is actively “at work” in our lives and in our trials

2. the Greek word for “works” is **sunergo**

- a. this Greek word has two parts
 1. sun - with
 2. ergo – to work
 3. **to partner in labor; to help in work; workers together**
 - b. in other words, God “works **with** the trials” in our lives to change us
 3. so, no matter WHAT has happened in your life, GOD is “working” with everything that has happened in your life to change you
 4. E. Jackson – use what ever is in the kitchen to make a meal
3. There is nothing in your life that God cannot use to change you.

B. We Know THE EXTENT THAT GOD WORKS IN OUR TRIALS

Vs. 28 – “And we know that **in all things God works for the good** of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

1. PLEASE NOTICE WHAT “KIND” of trials God works in; all kinds of trials!

- a. The Greek word for “all” is **pas**
 1. each
 2. every
 3. any
 4. everything
- b. The true meaning of pas is EVERYTHING
 1. meaning, GOD WORKS IN ANY AND EVERY SITUATION, TRIAL AND EXPERIENCE THAT OCCURS IN THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN
 2. Good **and** Bad

2. Let’s realize that good is good and bad is bad

- a. a good experience
 2. blessings
 3. success
 4. spiritual growth
 5. having a child
 6. getting married
 7. leading someone to Christ
 8. worshipping God
- b. a bad experience
 1. death
 2. cancer
 3. the loss of a child
 4. the loss of a spouse

5. getting fired
6. breaking your leg
7. finding out that you have cancer
- c. please do not think that God “causes” bad things to happen to you and then uses them to change you
 1. God “brings the good”

James 1:17 – “Every **good and perfect gift is from above**, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”
 2. God “does not bring the bad”

James 1:13 – “When tempted, **no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone;**”
 3. many of us will easily see how God works all things out of the “good things” that happen in our lives – for they come from Him.
 4. However, most of us may struggle with believing that God can work equally in the “bad experiences” in our lives
 - a. for years, I did not really “include” the bad things that happened in my life as being part of God’s work in my life.
 - b. however, the Word of God says **ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD**. That means the good and the bad.
3. LET US LOOK AT SOME Biblical illustrations of how God **uses** the good and the bad of our lives
 - a. the classic illustration of **JOSEPH**
 1. sold into slavery by his brothers
 2. sold as a slave to Potiphar
 3. accosted by Potiphar’s wife
 4. being thrown into prison for 2 years
 5. interpreting Pharaoh’s dream
 6. being put second in command behind Pharaoh
 7. his brothers coming to Egypt to find grain, only to realize that their brother was now second in command to Pharaoh and begging for their lives
 8. Joseph uttered the “parallel” verse of **Romans 8:28**

Genesis 50:19-20 – “But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? **You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.**”

 - a. Did Joseph’s brothers sin against Joseph?
 - b. Did other unfortunate acts occur in Joseph’s life?
 - c. was Joseph treated fairly throughout his life?

- d. and yet, God “used” all of those experiences, good and bad, in Joseph’s life for the “saving of many lives.”
- b. the other classic example in Scripture is the death of **JESUS CHRIST**
 - 1. who innocently came to this earth to become the sacrifice for mankind
 - 2. who served and ministered during His life on this earth
 - 3. only to be arrested, beaten and crucified
 - 4. was it fair; was it “all good?” Did “bad things” happen to Jesus?
 - 5. consider this: if an innocent Jesus Christ did not come to this earth and die on the cross for our sins, we would have no savior
 - 6. **Acts 2:22-23** – “Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through Him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, **with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross.**”

C. We Know the **PURPOSE THAT GOD WORKS IN OUR TRIALS**

- 1. Now, what is **THE REASON** that God works in our trials?
 - a. is it so that we, as Christians, can be happy? After all, it says that He works “for the good” of those who love Him.
 - b. is it that God wants all of us to be successful with no struggles and problems?
 - c. is God’s goal that all believers have:
 - 1. a beautiful house?
 - 2. wonderful, well-behaved children?
 - 3. money in the bank?
 - 4. a successful life?
- 2. Now, if our ultimate happiness and success is God’s goal, how do you explain . . .
 - a. all of the struggles of the Old and New Testament saints?
 - 1. Joseph
 - 2. Moses
 - 3. Elijah
 - 4. John
 - 5. The Twelve Disciples
 - 6. The Apostle Paul
 - 7. Our Lord Jesus
 - b. all of the struggles of fellow believers?
 - 1. the struggle of depression of the English Preacher, **Charles Spurgeon**
 - 2. the loss of black Pastor, **Dr. E. V. Hill’s** wife to cancer?

3. the current struggle of Pastor John Piper with cancer?
 4. the story of **Dr. James M. Boice**, Pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, PA for some 32 years.
 - a. who found out that he had liver cancer 2 hours before he would preach on Good Friday
 - b. some eight weeks later, he was dead.
 5. the many believers in Nashville who have lost their homes **and have no flood insurance?**
 6. “In the June, 1980 issue of Our Daily Bread, the story is told about a Christian who providentially escaped death. An unexpected delay in New York kept him from catching **Flight 191** in Chicago, which crashed with all 254 aboard. That article brought this note from a reader who had a story of **another believer who was not spared on that flight**: ‘I just had to let you know about one of God’s great saints **who ran to make Flight 191 – and made it**’ His name was **Edward E. Elliott**, beloved Pastor of the Garden Grove Orthodox Presbyterian Church in California. His plane from Pennsylvania was late, and a friend who had accompanied him to Chicago said he last saw him dashing forward into the terminal to make his connection. As I read about Pastor Elliott’s fruitful ministry, the question was raised: “**Was Divine providence operating only in New York and not in Chicago?**” ‘At the time, Reverend Elliott didn’t know he was indeed “running to Heaven”. . . Pastor Elliot left behind a wife and four children.
3. let us look at **THE REASON** that God “works for the good and bad” in our lives
 - a. it is found in **verse 29** – “For those God foreknew he also predestined **to be conformed to the likeness of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”
 - b. **DID YOU SEE THAT?**
 1. God’s **ULTIMATE PURPOSE** in our lives as Christians is not to:
 - a. make us happy
 - b. or make us successful
 2. **NO, GOD’S ULTIMATE PURPOSE IN OUR LIVES IS TO MAKE US MORE LIKE JESUS!**
 - a. God will teach us **humility** in our successes as we realize that **He** has gifted us with our **mind** and our **ability**
 - b. God will teach us **thankfulness** as we experience His **financial provisions** in times of need
 - c. God will teach us **dependence** as we find ourselves unable to continue but can do so through **His strength**

- d. God will teach us **peace** as we hear of a tragedy in our family and **He never leaves us**
- e. God will teach us **repentance** as we fall into sin and sense **His gracious forgiveness**

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF BELIEVERS IN THEIR TRIALS

A. God **WORKS IN THOSE WHO LOVE HIM** – Our **Attitude**

Vs. 28 – “And we know that in all things God works for the **good of those who love Him**, who have been called according to His purpose.”

1. Does God promise to “**work things out for everybody in the whole world?**”

- a. the Scriptures “qualify” the people that God promises to “work all things out” for
- b. God promises to work all things out “for those who love Him.”
 - 1. now, let us look at what it means to love God
 - a. in some ways, it is somewhat similar to what it means to love a person
 - b. when I fell in love with my wife
 - 1. I wanted to be **with her all of the time**
 - 2. I wanted to **learn as much as I possibly could about her**
 - 3. **I did not want to disappoint her**
 - 4. in fact, **I wanted to make her happy**
 - 5. and, **if I wronged or hurt her, I wanted to fix it as soon as possible**
 - 2. those who love the Lord Jesus Christ should love Him “the same way”
 - a. we should **want to be with Him**
 - b. we should **want to learn as much about Him as possible**
 - c. we should **never want to disappoint Him**
 - d. we should **want to bless Him, to make Him happy**
 - e. and **when we sin, we should “run to repentance,”** in order to restore our relationship with Him.
- 2. It is people “**like this**” that God makes His promise to “work for the good”
 - a. that He will take each and every situation, good or bad, and use it to make His children like Himself.
 - b. **THAT is WHY you see Godly people CHANGING, becoming more like Jesus**
 - 1. because God is working
 - 2. because God is using each and every experience, each and every event, to make us more like Jesus.
 - c. **SO . . . IF YOU ARE NOT CHANGING . . .**
 - 1. if you are NOT becoming more like Jesus
 - 2. if you are still “just like yourself”

3. THEN, YOU NEED TO SERIOUSLY WONDER IF YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN AT ALL

- a. God cannot enter a person's life AND NOT CHANGE IT!
- b. So . . . if you are NOT CHANGING, becoming more like Christ, then you need to ADMIT IT!

B. God WORKS IN THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CALLED

Vs. 28 – “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.”

1. THE REASON THAT GOD IS CHANGING YOUR LIFE IS THAT HE BEGAN THAT WORK!

- a. LOOK AT **Philippians 1:6** – “being confident of this, that **He who began a good work** in you **will carry it on to completion** until the day of Christ Jesus.”
- b. If God called you to Himself – HE WILL DO THE WORK OF CHANGING YOU!
- c. Look at **Romans 8:28 AND 29 AND 30!**
“And we know that in all things **God works for the good** of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. For those **God foreknew He also predestined** to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those **He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified.**”

2. LET ME SAY IT AGAIN, IF YOU ARE NOT CHANGING; IF YOU ARE NOT BECOMING MORE LIKE JESUS, THEN GOD MAY NOT BE IN YOUR LIFE AT ALL!

Conclusion

1. For the believer, God uses **EVERYTHING** good and bad to make us more like Jesus
2. **In 1921**, a missionary couple from Sweden named **David and Svea Flood** went with their 2-year-old son to what was then called the **Belgian Congo**. The Ericksons, another couple, went with them as missionaries.

This was a huge step of faith for the Floods. At the village of N'dolera they were rebuffed by the Chief, who would not let them enter his town for fear of alienating the local gods.

The two couples decided to go a half a mile up the road and build their own mud huts.

They prayed for a spiritual breakthrough, but there was none.

The only contact with the villagers was a young boy, who was allowed to sell them chickens and eggs twice a week. **Svea Flood decided that if this was the only African she could talk to, she would try to lead the boy to the Lord.** In fact she succeeded. The little boy was saved but there were no other encouragements.

Meanwhile, malaria continued to strike one member of the little band after another.

In time, the Erickson's decided they had enough suffering and returned to the central mission station. David and Svea Flood remained near N'dolera to go on alone.

Then, of all things, Svea found herself pregnant in the middle of the primitive wilderness. When the time came for her to give birth, the village Chief softened enough to allow a midwife to help her. A little girl was born, whom they named **Aina**.

The delivery, however, was exhausting, and Svea Flood was already weak from bouts of malaria. The birth process was a heavy blow to her stamina. **Svea Flood died 17 days later.**

Inside her husband, David Flood, something snapped in the moment. He dug a grave, buried his 27-year-old wife, and then took his children back down the mountain to the mission station. Giving his newborn daughter, Aina, to the Ericksons, he snarled, **"I am going back to Sweden. I've lost my wife, and I obviously can't take care of this baby. God has ruined my life."**

With that, David Flood headed for the port, rejecting not only his calling, but God himself.

Within 8 months, both of the Ericksons were stricken with a mysterious disease and died within days of each other. The baby was then turned over to some American missionaries, who changed her Swedish name to **"Aggie"** and eventually brought her back to the United States at the age of three.

This adopted family loved the little girl and were afraid that if they tried to return to Africa, some legal obstacle might separate her from them. So they decided to stay in the states and switch from missionary work to pastoral ministry. That is how Aggie grew up in South Dakota. As a young woman, Aggie attended North Central Bible College in Minneapolis. There she met and married a young man named **Dewey Hurst** who became a Pastor.

Years passed. The Hursts enjoyed a fruitful ministry. Aggie gave birth first to a daughter, then a son. **In time, her husband became President of a Christian college in the Seattle area and Aggie was intrigued to find so much Scandinavian heritage there.**

One day a Swedish religious magazine appeared in her mailbox. She had no idea who had sent it and of course she couldn't read the words. But as she turned the pages, all of a sudden a photo stopped her cold. **There in a primitive setting was a grave with a white cross – and on the cross were the words SVEA FLOOD.**

Aggie jumped in her car and went straight for the college faculty member who, she knew, could translate the article.

“What does this say?” she demanded.

The instructor summarized the story. It was about some missionaries who had come to N’dolera long ago. . .the birth of a white baby. . .the death of the young mother . . .**the one little African boy who had been led to Christ . . .and how, after the whites had all left, the boy had grown up and finally persuaded the Chief to let him build a school in the village.**

This article said that gradually this little boy won all of the students to Christ. Even the Chief had become a Christian. Today, there were 600 Christian believers in that one village . . .all because of the sacrifice of David and Svea Flood.

For the Hursts’ twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, the college presented them with a gift of a vacation to Sweden. There, Aggie sought to find her real father.

An old man by now, David Flood had remarried, fathered 4 more children, and had generally destroyed his life with alcohol.

He had recently suffered a stroke. Still bitter, he had one rule in his family. **“Never mention the name of God, because God took everything from me.”**

After an emotional reunion with her half brothers and half sister, Aggie brought up the subject of seeing her father. The others hesitated. **“You can talk to him,”** they replied, **“even though he’s very ill now. But you need to know that whenever he hears the name of God he flies into a rage”.** Aggie was not deterred. She walked into the dirty apartment, with liquor bottles everywhere, and approached the 77-year-old man lying on a rumpled bed. **“Papa?”**, she said tentatively.

He turned and began to cry, **“Aina”**, he said. **“I never meant to give you away.”**

“It’s all right, Papa,” she replied, taking him gently in her arms. **“God took care of me.”**

The man instantly stiffened. The tears stopped. **“God forgot all of us. Our lives have been like this because of Him.”** He turned his face back to the wall. Aggie stroked his face and then continued, undaunted. **“Papa, I’ve got a little story to tell you, and it is a true one.**

You did not go to Africa in vain. Mama did not die in vain. The little boy you won to the Lord grew up to win that whole village to Jesus Christ. The one seed you planted just kept growing and growing. Today there are 600 African people serving the Lord because you were faithful to the call of God in your life. . . Papa, Jesus loves

you. He has never hated you.” The old man turned back to look into his daughter’s eyes. His body relaxed.

He began to talk. And by the end of the afternoon. He had come back to the God he had resented for so many decades.

Over the next few days, father and daughter enjoyed warm moments together. Aggie and her husband soon had to return to America—and within a few weeks, David Flood had gone into eternity.

A few years later, the Hurst’s were attending a high-level evangelism conference in London, England, when a report was given from the nation of Zaire (the former Belgian Congo). **The Superintendent of the National church, representing some 110,000 baptized believers**, spoke eloquently about the gospel’s spread in his nation. Aggie could not help going to ask him afterwards if he had heard of David and Svea Flood. “Yes madam, “the man replied in French, his words then being translated into English. **“It was Svea Flood who led me to Jesus Christ. I was the boy who brought food to your parents before you were born.** In fact, to this day your mother’s grave and her memory are honored by all of us.” He embraced her in a long, sobbing hug, then he continued, **“You must come to Africa to see, because your mother is the most famous person in our history.”**

In time, that is exactly what Aggie Hurst and her husband did. They were welcomed by cheering throngs of villagers. **She even met the man who had been hired by her father many years ago to carry her back down the mountain in a hammock-cradle.**

The most dramatic moment, of course, was when the Pastor escorted Aggie to see her mother’s white cross for herself. **She knelt in the soil to pray and give thanks.** Indeed, God uses it all, doesn’t He?