

The Work of God

Have you ever wondered what God is doing or why He allows certain things to happen? There are so many things in life that seem utterly senseless. Why did God allow that person to die who showed so much promise? Why did God prolong the life of that other person who has done so much evil? Why did God allow that opportunity to fall through, or that war to happen, or that disaster to take place? What is the sense in it all?

It's true that we do know some things about God's will. The Bible tells us that God is gathering a peculiar people for Himself out of every tribe and nation (Titus 2:14, 1 Peter 2:9). We know that one day Jesus will return (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17). We know that one day we will live in a perfect world where there will be no death, sorrow, crying, or pain (Revelation 21:1-4). We know these things because God has revealed them to us.

But in our own lives there's so much that seems senseless. Sometimes we may eventually come across a reason, but other times it never makes any sense. Yet the Bible tells us that all events are orchestrated by God. The Lord governs the hearts of kings (Exodus 14:8), raises up nations and tears them down (Deuteronomy 8:20), guides history (Isaiah 46:10), works all things together for good (Romans 8:28), and has even preordained good works for us that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10). History isn't random a collection of random events that have happened to random people. It's all part of a grand tapestry of events that are woven together by God. So why does that tapestry seem so random and senseless?

The Bible gives us the answer: it's because God wants us to live by faith, not by sight. If we knew why everything happened then faith wouldn't be necessary. When God hides His purposes He us to see if we will trust Him when life doesn't make sense. Do we really believe that God is loving, or do we abandon

our faith in Him the moment something happens that we don't understand?

The book of Ecclesiastes tells us that God has deliberately hidden His purposes from mankind:

Ecclesiastes 3:10-11: "I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end."

Do you see that last line there? We're told that *no one* can find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end. It's *impossible* to know the full extent of what God is doing because He's hidden it from us. That teaching is repeated a few chapters later:

Ecclesiastes 8:16-17: "When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also there is that neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes:) Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea farther; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it."

When God does something in our life He doesn't send us a message to explain in detail what's going on. Sometimes we can see things work together and get a glimmer of understanding, but other times we may never find out why something happened. Even when we think we know what's going on it's impossible to uncover the complete tapestry of history. As the passage above

says, even if a man tries to figure it out he won't find it. A wise man might think that he knows it but he won't find it out either. God has deliberately hidden His plans from us so that we have to live by faith, not by sight.

Think of it this way. Even when we think we know what's going on, do we really have all the facts? Can we see all of history? Do we actually know everything that has ever happened to everyone who has ever lived? Do we understand how each piece fits with all the others? Without complete knowledge (which only God possesses), all we have is an incomplete picture which can be very misleading. It's entirely possible that things we think are important aren't very important at all, and things that seem minor are history-changing milestones. There are many factors that we can't see – and those factors may have tremendous importance.

There is a point to all of this. There will be times in our life when it seems that events simply have no meaning. Sometimes people's faith in God is destroyed when some terrible disaster happens (such as the death of a loved one) and they interpret that to mean there is no God (or God is evil). There are others who are stuck in terrible circumstances and who can't see a reason for it. Their suffering seems pointless and arbitrary. Why doesn't God rescue them? Doesn't He see what's going on? Doesn't He care? After all, God has infinite power and wisdom. Why would an all-powerful and loving God put someone in such a terrible situation?

The key here is that there's much more going on than what we can see. Our suffering isn't pointless; it's necessary. Jesus Himself made us that promise:

Luke 17:1: "Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!"

John 16:33: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the

world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

Romans 8:18: “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

We may not understand why these terrible trials are necessary, but God does. The Lord wants us to *trust Him*. When disaster strikes we must trust God, who sees what we can't see and who knows what we don't know. We must stop thinking that we understand what's going on and start trusting the God who really does know everything. We must live by faith. God is glorified when we trust Him in spite of our circumstances and in spite of what we can see.

Life is a test of faith. When we don't understand why things are happening, are we willing to step back and trust God? Are we willing to admit that we don't have all knowledge and trust the God who does? Or will we instead foolishly claim to know exactly what's going on and curse God for being arbitrary and cruel?

One day God may reveal to us the panorama of history and explain how it all fits together. Until that day comes we must hold on to God and have faith. Without faith it's impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).