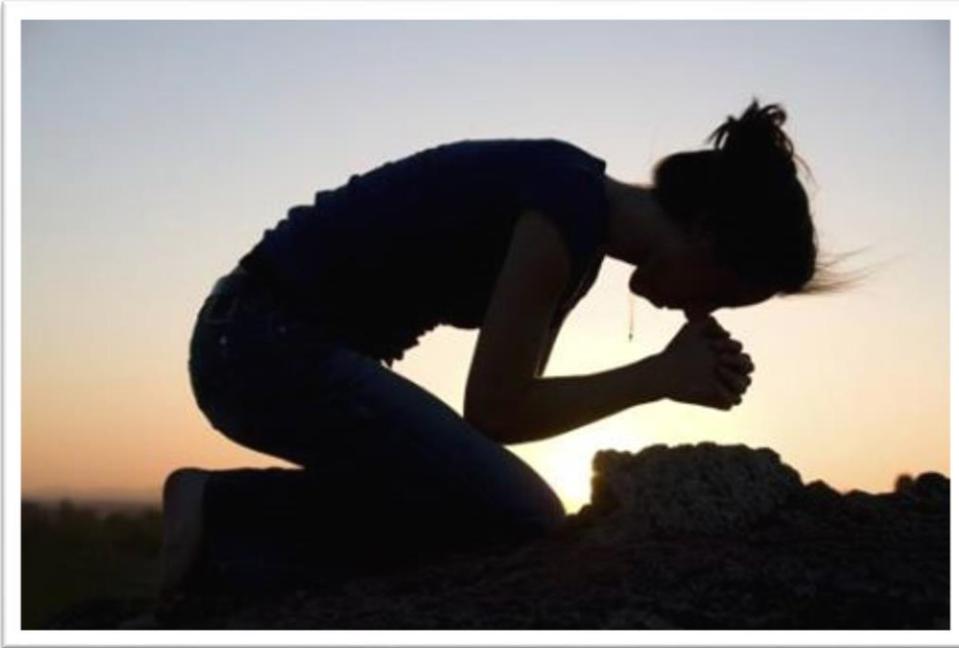


INEXPLICABLE SUFFERING



“I didn’t sign up for this.”

Inexplicable suffering can cause a LOT of doubt. Two different people I care a lot about are both going through some of the worst things imaginable. There is no rhyme or reason for the two tragedies either. Many terrible things can be explained by human sinfulness or stupidity. However, in the case of these two people, what they are suffering has come upon them for no apparent reason. What are they to believe about God in the midst of this? Are they to blame themselves as if they were somehow at fault? What are they to do?

This is what I shared with them.

Jesus was asked about a man suffering from blindness. In fact, the man had been born blind. The disciples assumed the cause was his own sinfulness or that of his parents. Jesus firmly contradicted them. “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life” (John 9:3).

So too in their suffering. The work of God will be displayed in their lives.

When we give our lives to Christ, it is like the wedding vows: “for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, and death will NEVER part us.” I fear that much of our evangelism does not make this clear. Too often, the invitation to accept Christ IMPLIES that giving your life to Christ will bring about a relatively trouble-free, prosperous, and happy life. And you get heaven as well! Who wouldn’t want that?

But I ask you, is a relatively trouble-free life what we see lived out in the New Testament? NOT AT ALL. What we do see instead are constant calls to faithfulness in the midst of persecution and suffering. Yes, we do have victory in Jesus right now, but it is a conquering in the MIDST of a painful world, often through “the valley of the shadow of death.”

Have you surrendered your life to Jesus? Have you entrusted yourself to him with the intention of becoming his follower? Are you saying to God, “Whatever you would like to do with my life you may do?” Having done so, God will take you up on it. He will absolutely preserve you for eternity but HE GETS TO CHOOSE how your life will bring honor to Jesus. For that is the point of the human life – the enjoying of God and the honoring of Jesus.

C.S. Lewis, in his book *THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS*, records the following conversation between two devils. “Our cause is never more in danger than when a human, no longer desiring, but still intending to do God’s will, looks round upon a universe from which every trace of Him seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, but still obeys.”

Did you sign up for this when you gave your life to Jesus? If not, you can do so now. In my opinion, no greater glory comes to God, and nothing makes the devil scream more, than when in the midst of suffering, God’s people trust him and praise him anyway. Everyone can praise God if they win the Superbowl. But will you trust and praise God in tragedy?